

A FUSION RETRO PUBLICATION

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ZZAP! AMIGA

MICRO ACTION

TIM WRIGHT

Remembering the music of Magician's Castle

RESHOOT PROMIMA 3

Full Review - has the hype been hit?

THE ZZAP! INTERVIEW
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COMMODORE







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Hari Kirihimete



Here in the Kiwi branch of ZZAP! Towers, the evenings are getting lighter, and the weather is getting warmer as we head into summer.

There is also very little in the way of the Christmas hype that I remember back in the UK, so it feels very 'un-Christmassy'. However, I am doing my best to address that as I write the editorial for our Christmas issue of ZZAP!

AMIGA (yes, the print version of this should start arriving on your doormats early December!).

What could be better

presents to fill

your Christmas stockings than a SIZZLER and a GOLD Medal? Well, Santa has ensured these are delivered nice and early in the form of *Rogue Declan Zero (RDZ)* from nivrig, and *Reshoot Proxima 3* from spieleschreiber. Both games are very different, but share exceptional levels of quality and workmanship.

RDZ emerged as the triumphant victor of this year's Sword and Sorcery AmiGameJam competition, and has subsequently received a large update to catapult it from competition winner to a polished jewel (I just can't put this one down).

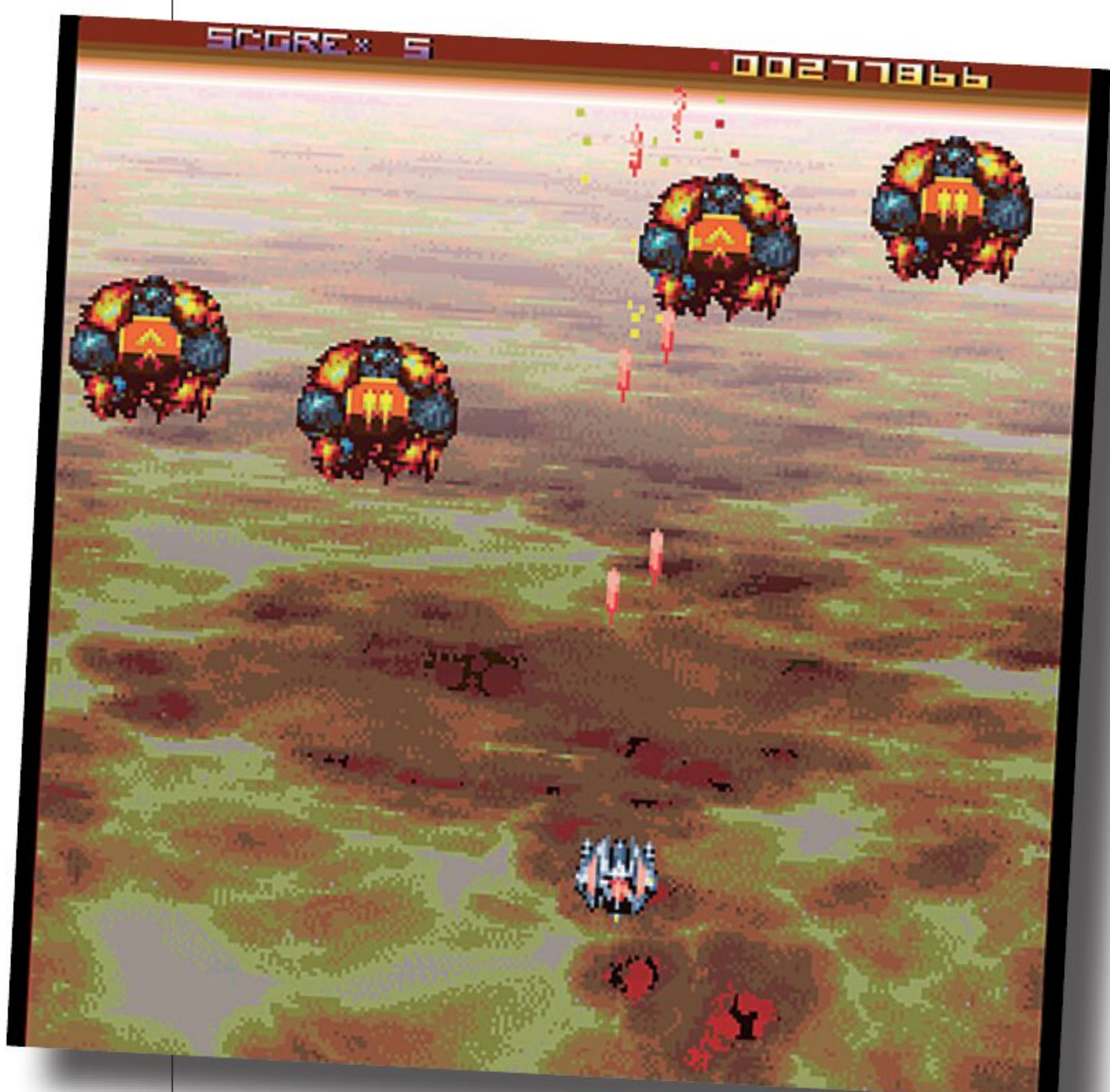
Reshoot Proxima 3 is the long-awaited third title in the *Reshoot* trilogy from Richard Löwenstein and his team. This game is of such exceptional quality, that we have awarded the highest accolade we can - the Gold Medal. This is the pinnacle of shoot-em-up games for the AMIGA and even eclipses the likes of *Xenon 2* and *Battle Squadron*, in our book.



Richard's coding is so meticulously engineered that you will experience no slowdowns when the action hots up, and playability is smooth and hugely satisfying.

The golden age of the Amiga lives on. We have reached a point now where we have such a broad mix of titles being released. At one end, we have the raw assembler-based epic that is *Reshoot Proxima 3*, and at the other end, simpler homebrew titles such as *GameX* (also reviewed in this issue). Scorpion Engine has spawned a huge number of projects from original platformers to arcade ports, and whilst most projects are long-termers, the numbers are large enough to see a consistent drip feed of new releases. To get *RDZ*, *Reshoot*, and not forgetting the excellent *Ooze* in the same issue is a lovely coincidence, but it highlights the quality of Amiga gaming is, on the whole, better than it has ever been.

Mame

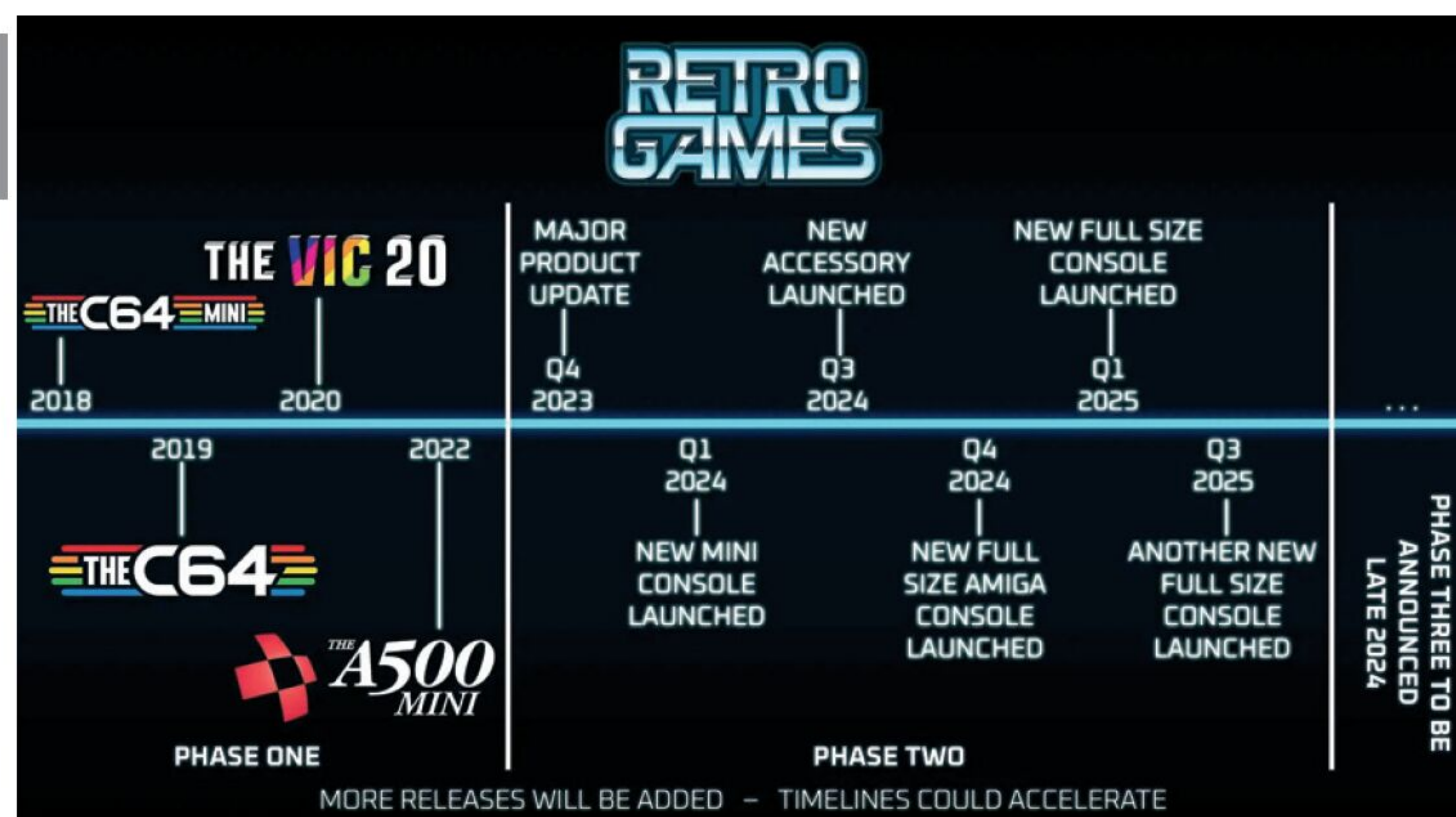




Christmas 2024 Sorted!

In a recent announcement, Retro Games Ltd, via their Facebook page, presented their proposed timeline of releases in what they call 'Phase 2'. This includes confirmation of a new **"Full Size Amiga Console"** for Q4 2024. Something that we have been gossiping about for months is now finally confirmed, and hopefully, more details will be revealed soon.

Whilst there is still



speculation on the form factor (I'm hoping for A1200 as opposed to A500), RGL have confirmed, *"We will be more specific on one particular question, yes, the planned pending full-sized Amiga product will have*

a working keyboard when launched."

Another comment from Retro Games Ltd is they are going "much, much broader" than Commodore. That can only mean Atari ST or ZX Spectrum, right?

You really need to know who to blame! Here is our panel of games reviewers – all kids (at heart)

CHRIS THACKER

Amiga and Amstrad fan, owner of enough computer and console stuff that he could open up a branch of CEX, and contributor to various mags, inc. Popular Retro, Metro, Crash and others. Supporter of up-and-coming creators, and generally the kind of person you'd want to share a pint with!



THIS MONTH

Waiting for the imminent delivery of the Spectrum Next, hunting down a few missing Evercade carts, and switching my remaining time between Super Mario RPG, The Talos Principle II, and Robocop: Rogue City. **For Christmas** Jenna Coleman. None of this fancy Amiga stuff, just Jenna, possibly a key to her house, and some sort of legally binding contact that ties us.

MARK MACRAE

Huge fan of all things C64, Amiga and arcade. As well as playing games, and writing for ZZAP! Amiga, Mark will solder C64s together and make bartop arcade cabinets with bits of wood and a Raspberry Pi.



THIS MONTH

Writing and editing this magazine! Also planning for a major system go-live for the NZ government. **For Christmas:** A RetroTink device would be nice to hook my real C64 upto a 5:4 monitor I have. Plus looking forward to some time off work and warm weather (summer here in NZ).

ANDREW FISHER

Commodore 64 fan, regular contributor to *Retro Gamer*, owner of several Amigas and classic consoles, over 40 years of gaming experience.



THIS MONTH

Recovering from major surgery with a foot-long scar, writing the final chapter of a new book, and getting pummelled in SNK vs Capcom on the C64.! **For Christmas:** I would love a Raspberry Pi 400 for retro computer emulation, it would make an ideal 'virtual Amiga' with its keyboard and mouse (you could plug in the A500 Mini's USB mouse too!).

PAUL MORRISON

Gaming since the 70s, but Commodore machines have his heart. Owner of a C64 and an Amiga 1200, and can often be found deep in a manky, disgusting dungeon. In an Amiga RPG, not real life!!



THIS MONTH

Much proofreading for Fusion Retro Books, whilst listening to the new Lovebites live album. I've also been playing Reshoot Proxima 3 as much as possible. What a stunner!! **For Christmas:** I'm actually quite interested in the Taito Super Pocket, even though I know it'll end up collecting dust. Actually, I'd really love some spare time to crack on with a book I'm working on!





N·E·W·S f·l·a·s·h·



...with David "Jazzcat" Simmons,
Hot data for vintage hardware!

Flying Shark

Flying Shark is a military-themed, vertically scrolling shoot 'em up.

In this game, players assume control of the titular biplane, navigating through five progressively challenging levels with the primary objective of defeating various military enemy forces, such as tanks, battleships, airplanes, and artillery.

Players manoeuvre their plane over a continuously scrolling background, and the scenery never ceases

to move until a runway is reached. Players have access to only two weapons: the standard shot, which travels a maximum distance equal to the screen's height, and three bombs.

Players start with three lives, and bonus lives are granted every 50,000 points. The game incorporates a checkpoint system where the player will restart from the begin-



ning of the checkpoint they reached before their demise. Sustaining damage from enemy fire results in the loss of a life, as well as a reduction in the plane's firepower back to its original state. Once all lives are depleted, the game comes to an end.

Magnus Tegström, the developer behind *Flying Shark*, shares his motivation for the remake and the challenges faced during the process:

"The idea for this *Flying Shark* port was conceived two years ago when I downloaded the initial Amiga port from the late 1980s. The game looked significantly different from the arcade version, adopting a more cartoonish style that I



didn't appreciate. Moreover, the game suffered from considerable lag, in contrast to the arcade's smooth 50 FPS scrolling experience.

That's when I began to contemplate whether it was feasible to program a 50 FPS engine that could provide seamless scrolling and handle two layers of graphics. Following my first programming attempt, I had a functional 50 FPS engine capable of managing enough moving objects to create an engaging game. However, I encountered difficulties in finding someone to port the arcade graphics, which featured 293 colours, to a 16-colour format.

Eventually, I was fortunate to collaborate with the talented pixel artist, John Tsakris, who offered his assistance. He has contributed graphics to various retro games. Additionally,



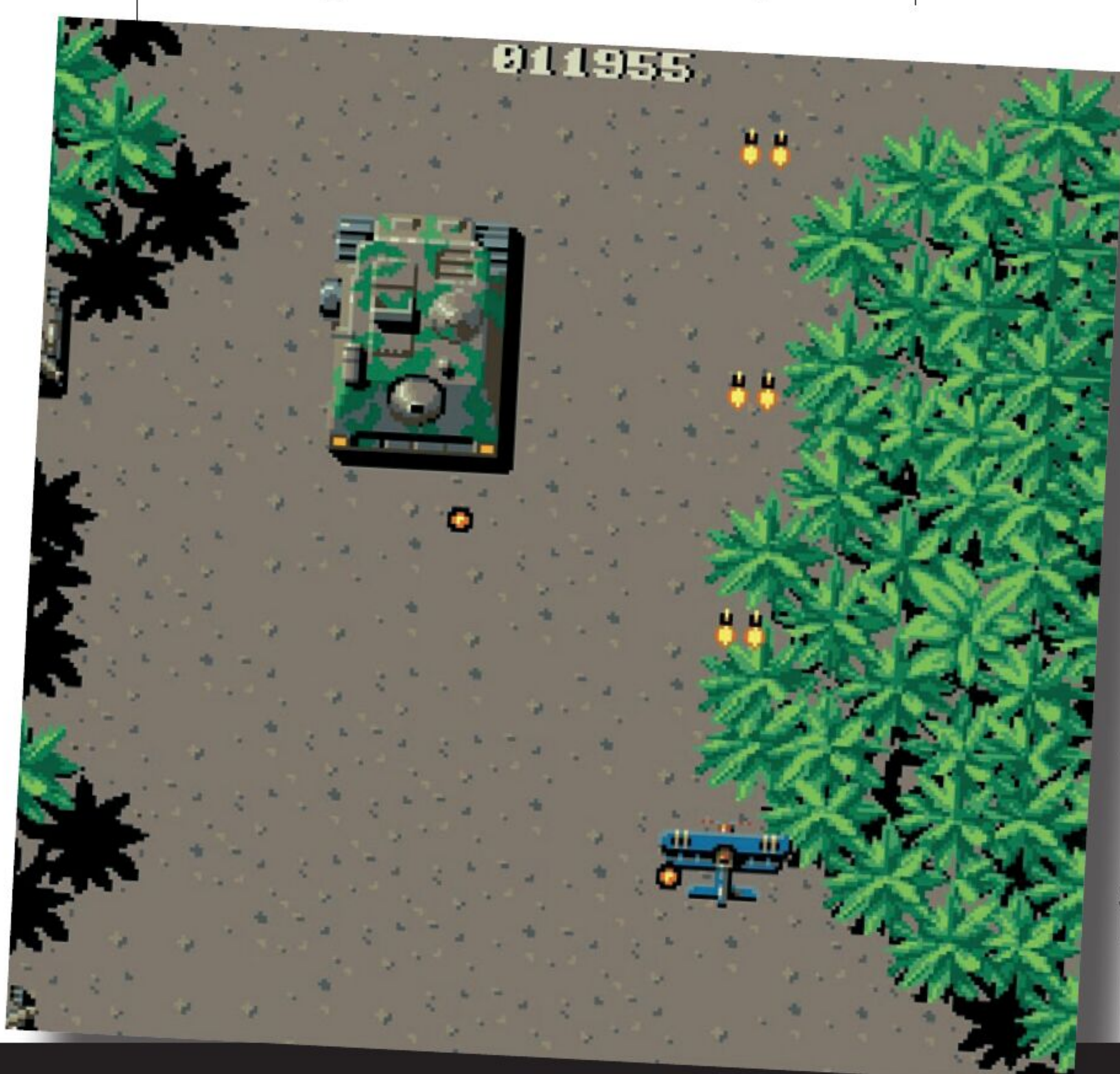
a skilled musician, Simone Bernacchia, reached out to me and expressed a strong desire to assist us in creating a port that closely resembles the arcade experience. Without their invaluable support, we wouldn't have reached our current stage of development.

Developing the game presented numerous challenges, since I was determined to ensure it would function on an A500 + 512KB, which alone posed a significant challenge given the extensive graphics that needed to be integrated into the game. The chip memory is nearly at full capacity, accommodating graphics, sound, and modules. I'll face a daunting

task in utilising all the arcade airplane animations, for instance. Thus, for each level in the game, I must clear the memory and load new graphics. This same prioritisation extends to the sound effects, as some have to be omitted due to memory constraints. It all comes down to deciding what we deem essential for inclusion in the game.

The motivation driving this project primarily revolves around ensuring that the game runs smoothly at 50 FPS and can be played on a standard Amiga 500. Additionally, we aim to closely replicate the graphics of the arcade game.

However, we intend to infuse our own creative touch into the game since these machines have entirely distinct hardware, preventing an exact replica of the arcade experience."





N·E·W·S f·l·a·s·h...

SUPER DELIVERY BOY

Super Delivery Boy by Nee-soGames offers a vibrant and delightful platforming experience. It is designed with family-friendly entertainment in mind and seeks to bring a smile to your face through its witty dialogue.

This game tells a relatable story of individuals who yearn to indulge in their beloved gaming machines but must also fulfill life's responsibilities. The central concept revolves around delivering boxes to customers through



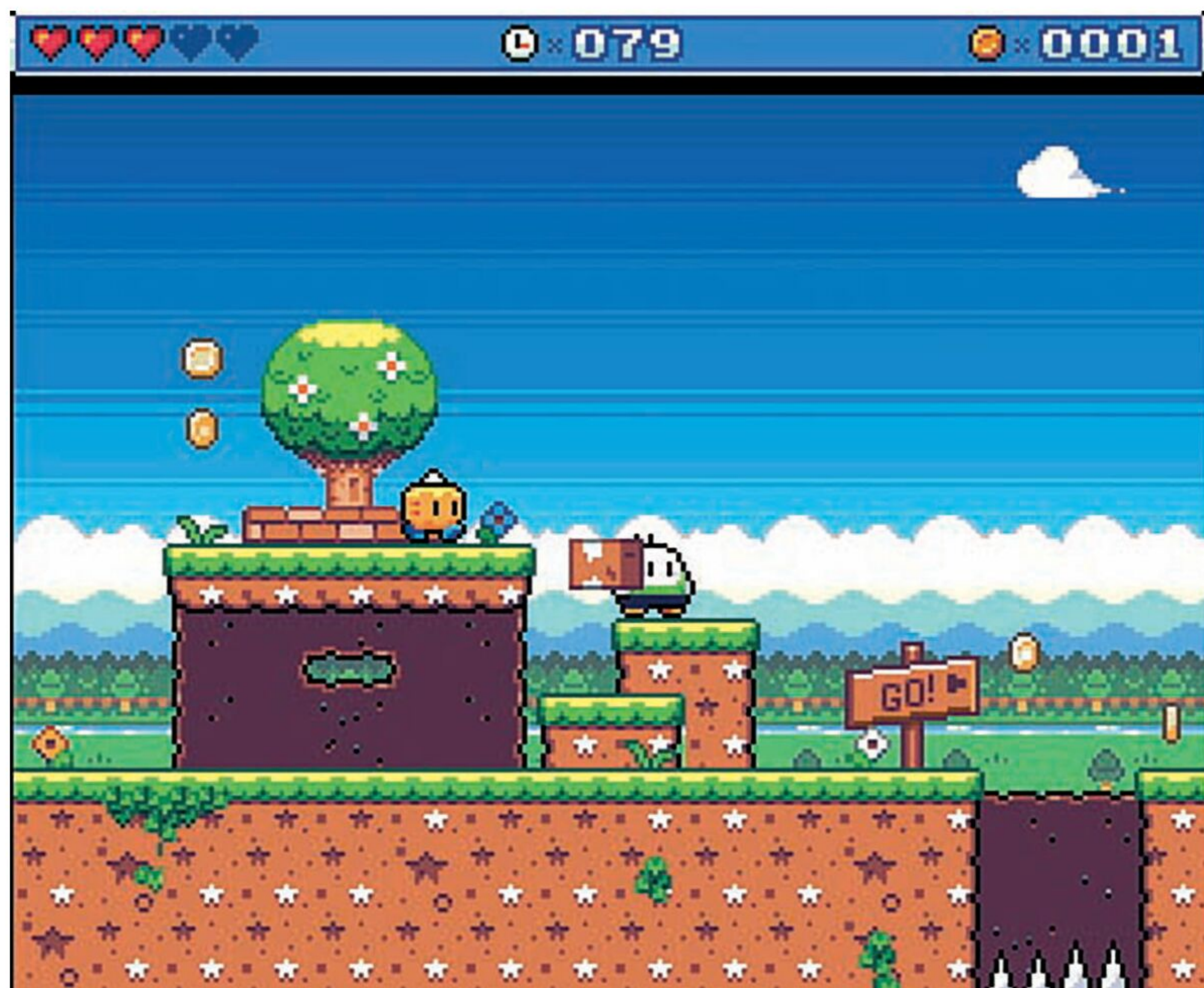
platforming, a task made challenging by the environmental obstacles, adversaries, and intricate puzzles. Should a box go astray during the journey, rest assured that friendly non-playable characters (NPCs) will be on hand to

assist your efforts.

In the final iteration of the game, you can anticipate four main levels, each inspired by a different season, featuring distinct foes, puzzles, and graphical elements. It reflects my personal interpretation of the platforming genre, brimming with intricate details, numerous interactive objects (including the ability to earn extra lives by depositing coins in a vending machine), engaging dialogues, and more.

These elements enrich the typically linear nature of platform games, fostering a vibrant, immersive game world (or at least that's the intention).

On the technical side, Super Delivery Boy boasts the EHB mode, which supports 64 colours on the





screen and employs multi-layer parallax scrolling. Additionally, it offers the convenience of saving your sound effects (SFX) and music volume preferences to disk. In its final form, the game should run smoothly on any Amiga system with at least 1MB of RAM.

However, for a more seamless and expedited gaming experience, it is recommended to use accelerated machines equipped with additional Fast RAM and a few extra megahertz over the stock configurations.

After all, we are approaching 2024, aren't we?



Aquabyss (update)

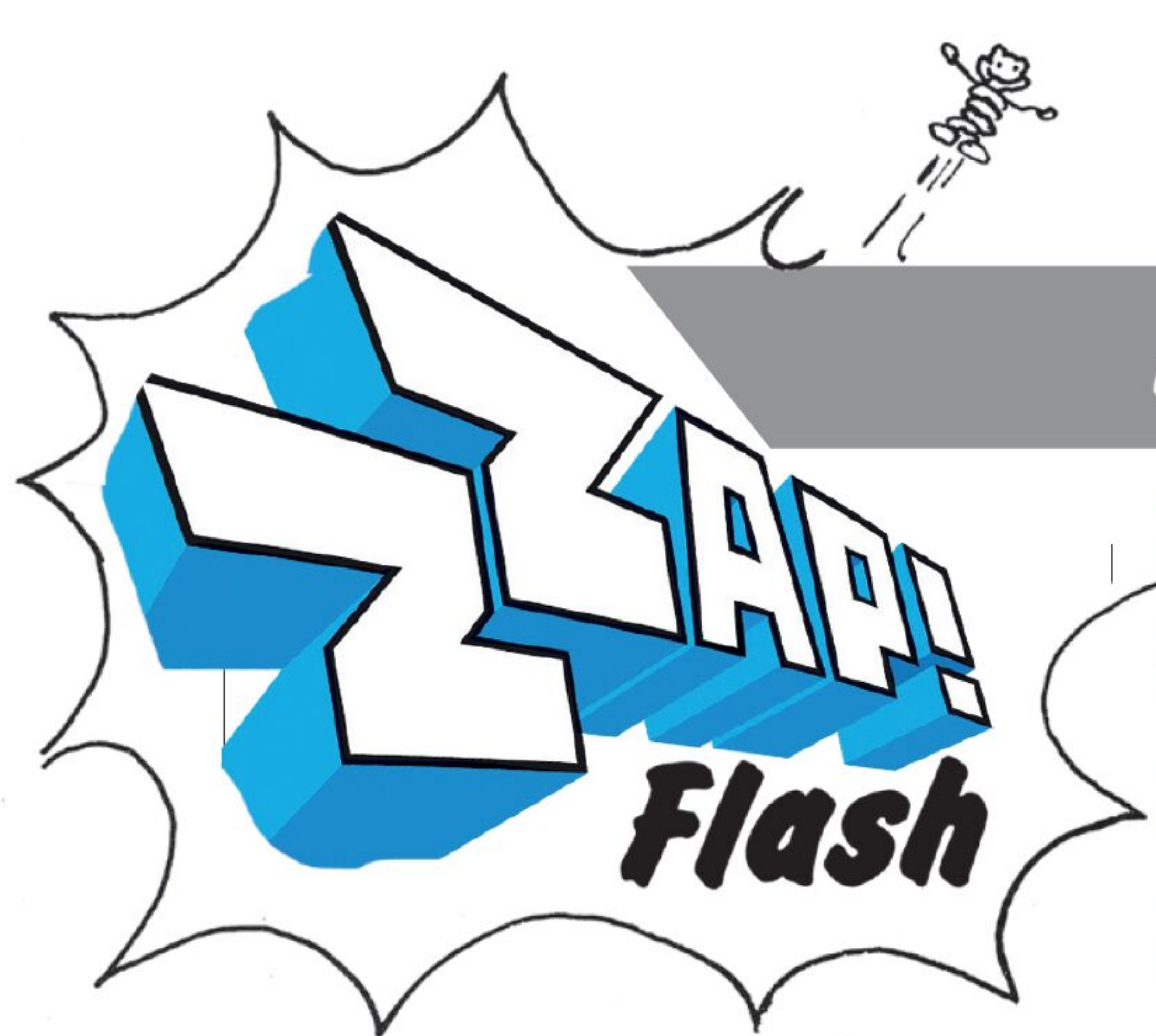
Despite a year having already passed since the release of the one-of-a-kind AQUABYSS game for the Amiga, the Aged Code studio has not stopped releasing patches and even brand-new features. This time it's a co-op mode for up to five players in a team! You can create such online teams without limitation. Each team has its own chat where they can communicate. In the screenshot,

we see the players fighting together against the pirates! The cooperative mode does not stop there. Players can also carry out other missions and help each other deliver goods to the cities that need them



most. The studio is still preparing new things for the game's ever-growing fan base.





N·E·W·S f·l·a·s·h·...



Electroman made its debut on the MS-DOS platform in 1992. Now, the talented Tuginem is hard at work bringing this classic to the Amiga, and the results are nothing short of impressive.

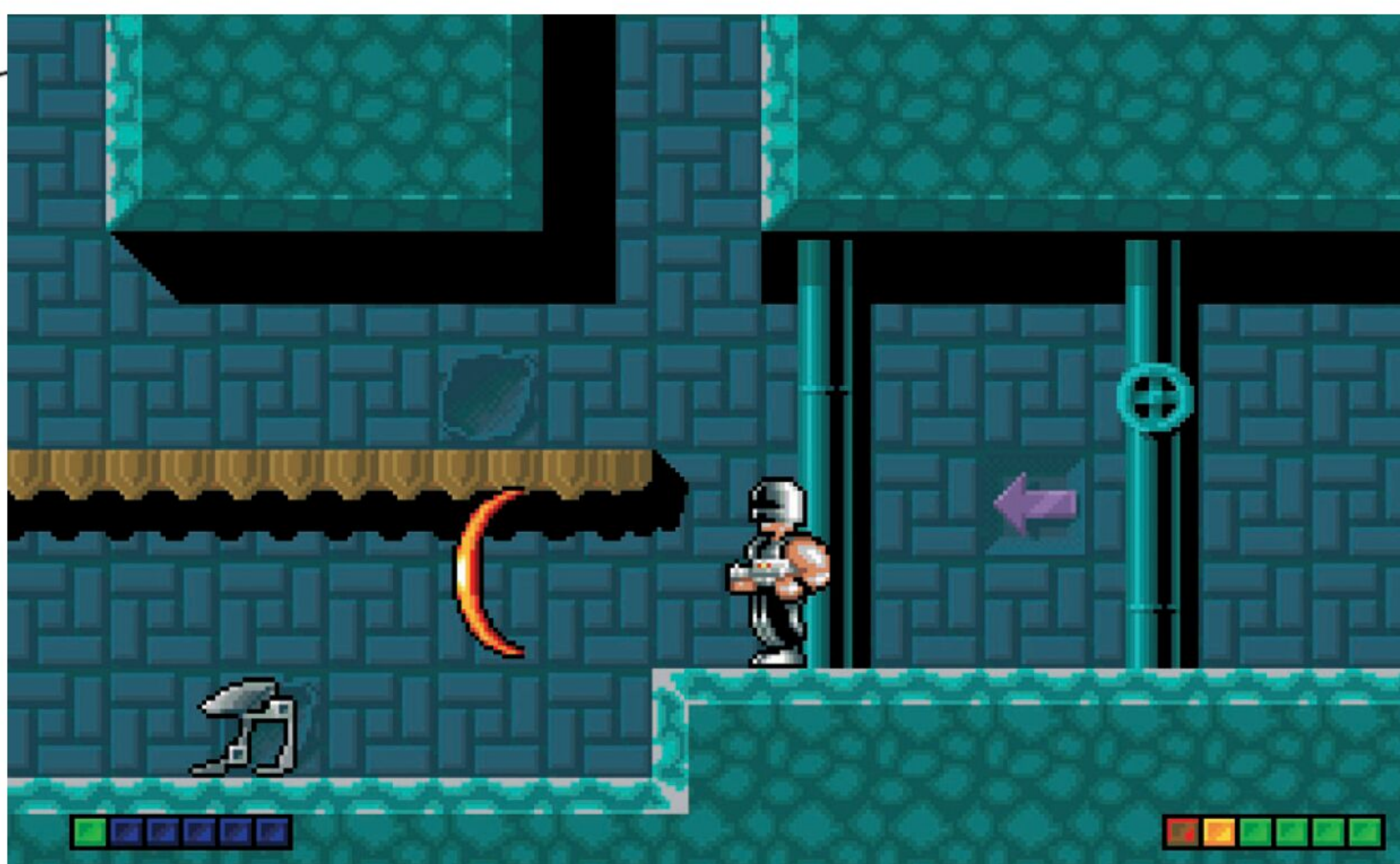
You might be wondering, how does this Amiga version stack up against the original? We reached out to Tuginem for an exclusive look at the project's progress.

Tuginem shared his thoughts: "I must admit that I am impressed with how faithfully we've managed to repro-

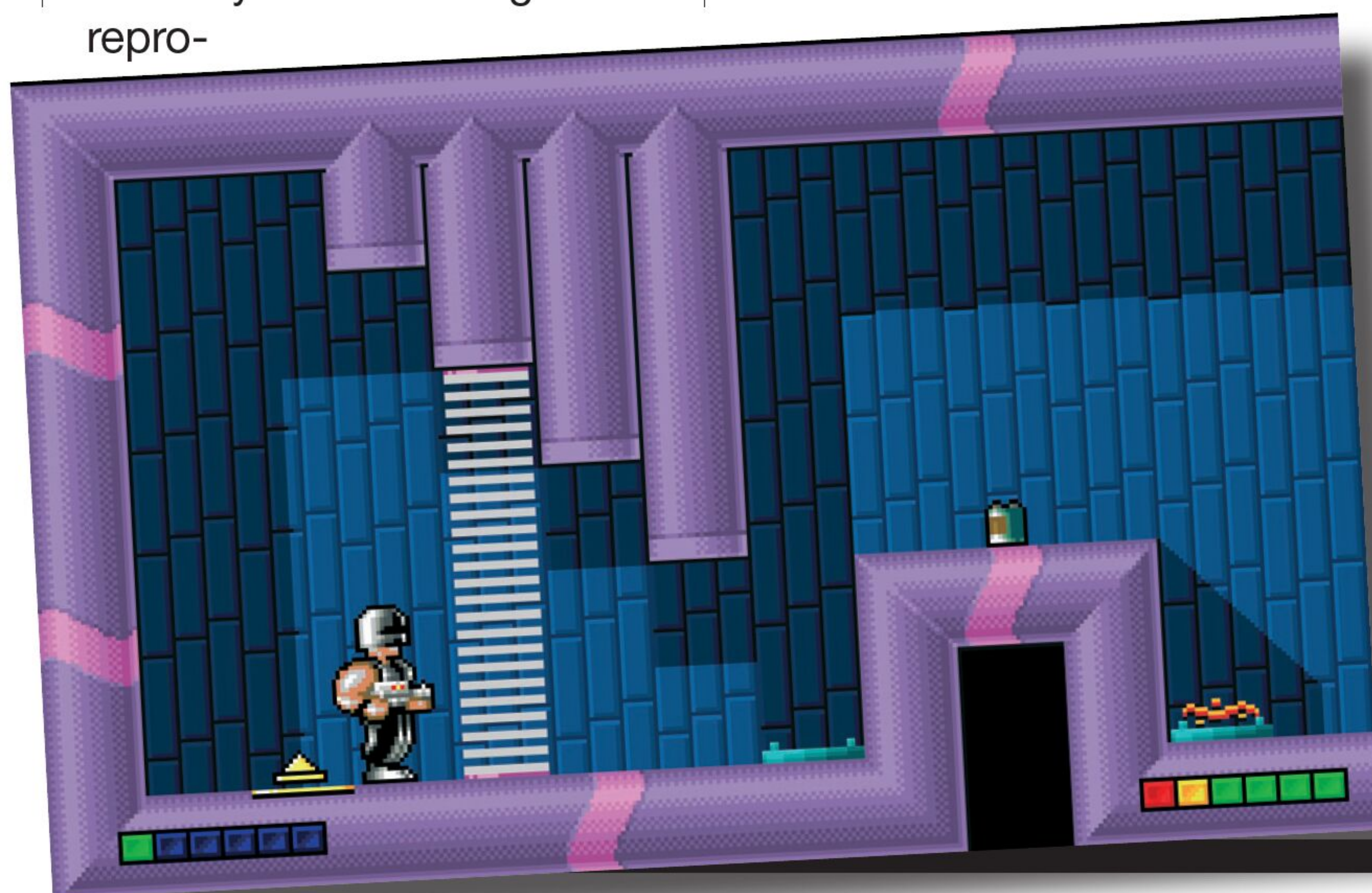
duce the game. While it won't be a 100% port due to certain hardware limitations, the Amiga version is shaping up quite well. We did face some challenges, like the Amiga Blitter's capacity for handling pasted graphics, but we've found creative solutions."

Here's a glimpse of the notable differences:

- The original game supported VGA graphics with 256 colours, whereas the Amiga version is limited to 64 colours.



- Controls have received extensive fine-tuning and are now 95% consistent with the original.
- In level 1, the number of enemies was slightly reduced to accommodate foreground net elements.
- Level 2 saw some rearrangement of tiles to optimise memory usage without impacting gameplay.
- Level 3 features modified green mines, now transformed into cannons, while a few mines were removed to maintain smooth animations.
- In level 4, Tuginem is working on changing the graphics of the rotating squares, as the Amiga's 16-pixel graphics constraint requires adjustments for the game's 24x24 pixel tiles.
- Tuginem has incorporated useful features, such as loading the previous game save with the F3



key, and saving the game progress with F2. The “M” key reveals a map of the entire level, making navigation easier.

Tukinem added some insights into the project’s origins: “Electroman was born from modifications to the code of the game Tony, another project of mine. While I’m currently focused on 8-bit computer versions written in Blitz Basic 2, Electroman is progressing well. Each level takes about 2-3 weeks to complete, and there are a total of 8 levels. The final level poses a unique challenge due to



its unusual background. As for the release date, I can’t provide a specific timeline, as life is unpredictable. I’ve learned from past experiences, such as Pinball Dreams 2, and I’m constantly honing my skills. Whether I’m working on the game or creating various converters and tools, I’m

dedicated to delivering a top-notch Electroman experience.”

While Tukinem aims to complete the game this year, he refrains from making any promises. Stay tuned for more updates on this exciting project!

The Name of the Rose

A series of mysterious deaths cast a shadow over a secluded abbey in Northern Italy. The friar William of Baskerville is called upon to untangle this deadly mystery. Set in the 14th century, this suspenseful tale unveils the abbey’s dark secrets for each passing fatality, which centres around a lost manuscript that could wreck the foundations of the Catholic Church.

Rune “Sparkler” Spaans has been a lifelong fan of The Name

of the Rose and classic adventure games, and seeks to combine the two in this fan project. This will not be a full game, but rather a proof of concept with rooms, characters, and a couple of puzzles. It’s still in its early stages, but things are looking positive for this project, with the Amigawave team showing interest in converting it to the Amiga. Read about it here first!



RESHOOT PROXIMA 3

**Spieleschreiber - 2023 /
€29,95 to €49,95**

In the distant future, humanity has colonized the Proxima Centauri star system, establishing fragile colonies on distant worlds. The survival of these colonies hangs in the balance as a relentless alien threat looms. It's up to you, a fearless pilot, to defend these outposts and secure humanity's last hope. This is the gripping narrative backdrop of *RESHOOT*

PROXIMA 3, an Amiga AGA game that takes retro gaming to the next level.

The *RESHOOT* games are a series of 'bullet-hell' shoot 'em up games developed by Richard Lowenstein and published under his company, Spieleschreiber. These games have garnered attention and a dedicated following in the retro gaming community for their exceptional quality and homage to the classic shoot 'em up

genre on the Amiga.

The first two games, *Reshoot* (2016) and *RESHOOT-R* (2019), are horizontally-scrolling shooters targeted at the AGA chipset, with Richard admitting he coded the second game as a chance to make up for shortcomings in the original.

This third game is the culmination of all of Richard's experience in getting the best out of the AGA chipset and learnings from the first two games. *Proxima 3* breaks the mold, being a vertical scroller, but retains the primary objective of protecting a single life, using your best mix of reflexes, courage, and memory to navigate the complex waves of enemies.

The challenge consists of five levels, from fiery sun to the eerie depths of hell, with a boss ship guarding the end of each. Amidst the blistering action, power-ups can be picked up to increase your speed





and weaponry, and just as importantly, protect you from enemy fire. Each hit reduces your power, and bare-bones is signified by a red/pink glow from your ship and firing a weaker stream of bullets of a similar colour. In this state, your ship is vulnerable to one final hit, unless more power-ups can be captured.

Are you ready to rewrite the cosmos and conquer the skies?



A gorgeous-looking vertically-scrolling shoot 'em up has arrived with plenty of challenge - even in

Easy Mode. There are several clever touches, from overlaid dialogue to handy ALERT warnings as attack waves converge on your craft from all sides. The shuddering effect as you take damage is neatly done. The first level reminds me of Konami's SNES hit Axelay, and it gets better from there. The pounding soundtrack is excellent, with snippets of sampled speech and great sound FX. When things escalate, the big bosses are as good as anything the Bitmap Brothers threw at us. This is up there with Xenon 2 for spectacle and shooting - high praise indeed.



RESHOOT PROXIMA 3



I love a good shmup, and in my opinion the Amiga has certain bars any new vertical scroller has to reach if it wants to be considered truly great: namely Xenon 2, Hybris, and Battle Squadron. I reckon Reshoot Proxima 3 clears those bars to stand as the new high watermark in Amiga shooters. Because it doesn't have the typical Amiga-standard oversized player ship, it feels more like an arcade game and is more enjoyable to play. It seems easy at first, and some of the attack waves repeat often throughout the game, but the difficulty ramps up and it does throw new things at you to keep it interesting. My only slight gripe is a maze section, but even that has enough of a spin to make it palatable. If you like arcade shmups and have a way to play it, you must buy Reshoot Proxima 3. It's that good.



Get the game here



"BEHOLD THE SIGHT OF YOUR SUN.
I WILL LEAVE NOTHING BUT ASHES"



Behind the awesome audio and visuals of this game is a real feat of engineering. It took a while before C64 musicians really got the most out of the SID chip, and I think we are now starting to see programmers like Richard Lowenstein really understanding the AGA chip and proving what it is capable of. Imagine if this game hit the shops in the '90s? The icing on the cake of all the impressive graphics are the transparent backgrounds. Level 2's clouds just smoke through enemies, and even partially reveal the distant land below, providing total perspective. I love the bullet-hell arcade games of the '90s, such as Batsugun, and this is of similar quality, which is high praise indeed. This is such fun on emulation, but if you have a real A1200, 4:3 monitor, and loud speakers, you will certainly enjoy the most awesome gaming experience. Support Richard and his team; go and buy this game now!



PRESENTATION 94%

Choice of great physical editions, two difficulty modes, high score save.

GRAPHICS 95%

Striking, original style, with lots of smooth-moving objects flying around.

SOUND 94%

Extraterrestrial sound FX are combined with speech and a thumping soundtrack.

HOOKABILITY 95%

No barriers to getting straight into the action, just as if you put your first 10 pence into a *Batsugun* arcade machine.

LASTABILITY 94%

Two difficulty modes to master, and a high score table to top.

OVERALL 96%

An unimaginable work ethic and attention to detail has led to one of the AMIGA's best ever games.

ZZAP!

with Richard Löwenstein

RP3 is obviously an amazing technical achievement and uses every ounce of AMIGA power. Do you think this is the limit, or is there more that can be achieved?

Technically, RP3 gets very close to what we think are the Amiga's limits today. In fact, one stage within RP3 uses 1.7 MB of the 2 MB of chip memory that the Amiga's AGA chipset has to offer, about 450 KB of which is dedicated to music and sound effects. Having said that, the sky is the limit. With some optimization, we could have implemented more visual effects based on polygons or chunky pixels. I would imagine that if we had added some moments of object scaling, the gameplay experience would have benefited. Having said that, take into account that game development is not only about technical challenges but more about what the

team is able to achieve. I am talking about family, knowledge, and endurance. As for me, after more than four years of developing RP3, I felt totally exhausted.

How much would you say players are missing out on in this game by using emulation?

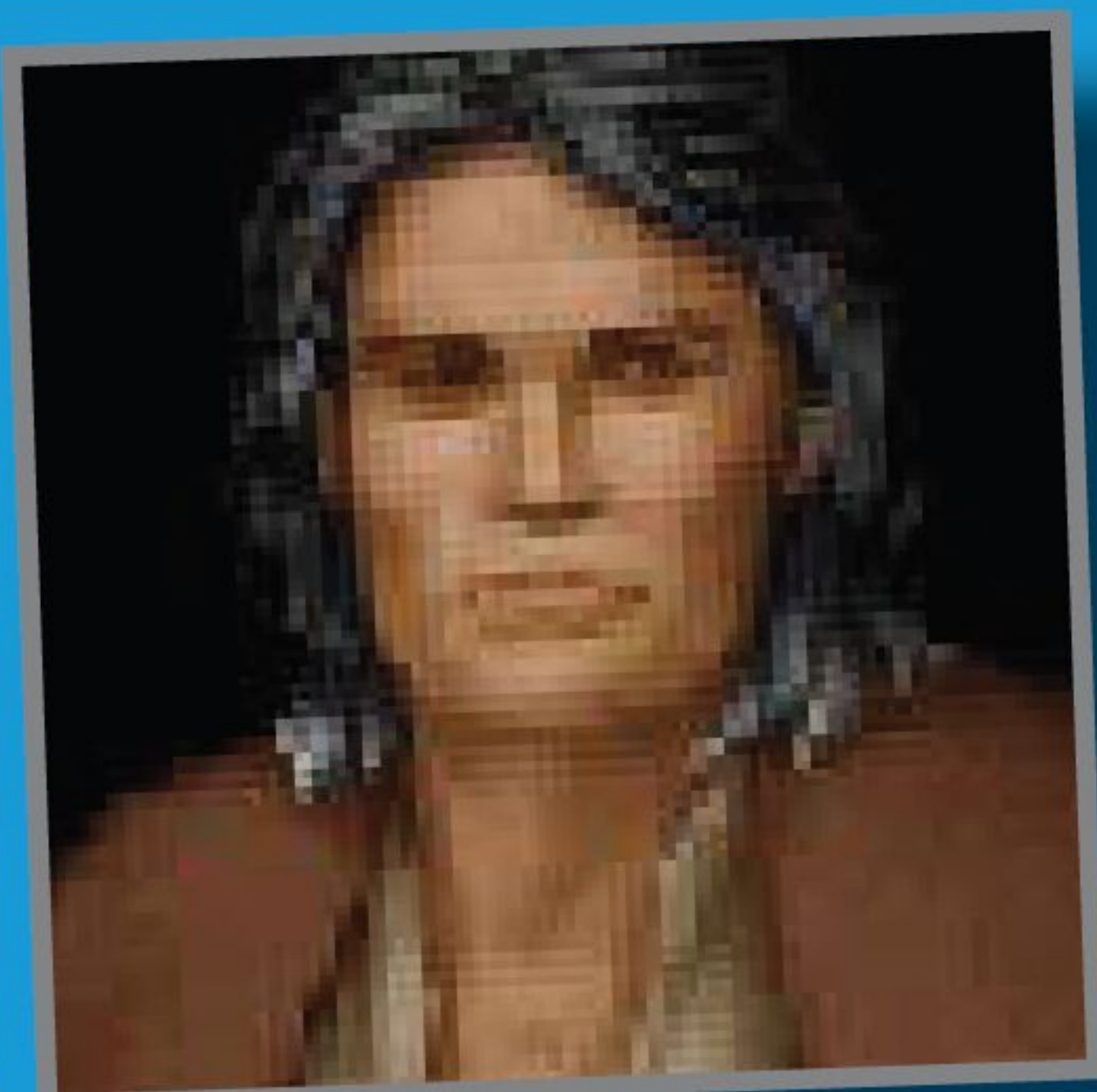
Emulation systems do not provide the full experience, as they lack the fidelity of the original hardware. While real AGA hardware can perform a quarterpixel horizontal scrolling, move sprites a quarter pixel, and display sprites in high resolution on a low-resolution screen, many emulations recreate this only partially or not at all. As Reshoot Proxima 3 makes use of all of these features, it feels best on a real A1200 or A4000. Also, I hear some emulation-based systems do not deliver the full audio quality. If

using emulation, I recommend a MISTer system, as it mimics the pacing and the visual and audio quality almost perfectly. Also, with its built-in CRT filters, the game looks as intended. On a modern flat display, without scanlines, some areas of the background might look a bit blocky or even garish.

There will be a large amount of non-technical folks who will want an easy way to play this game. Do you have any plans for a TheA500 Mini version?

The game runs on a A500 Mini, albeit with some audio issues.





The **ZZAP!** Interview

Ahead of our review of *Ooze: The Escape*, Mark caught up with Ooze developer **Haplo**, who also developed the wonderful *Tenebra* games on the AMIGA. He kindly gave us some insight into how this conversion came about and the challenges involved.

The game was originally developed for the ZX Spectrum. What made you want to port the game to other systems?

By chance, I happened to see a playthrough of it on YouTube. I thought it had a lot of potential on more powerful systems, so I contacted Andy Johns (the creator of the original ZX Spectrum version) and asked if he was interested in porting it to other platforms.

You have created amazing ports of this game, on both C64 and AMIGA, in six months. How did you manage that?

Actually, the C64 version was done in one month, and the Amiga version in two. Andy and I clicked really well from the beginning and formed a great team. This synergy really helped.

For the C64 version, I was able to use the codebase of my previous game, *Caim*, as a starting point, which got me ahead considerably. Andy also had some partially completed C64 graphics he could build upon. The Amiga version, on the other hand, was written from scratch (except for a few routines which I could use from *Tenebra*). Andy

redid all the graphics in Promotion NG. We added a lot of new features, rooms, and enemies to the Amiga version.

I spent about a couple of hours a day on the development, and a bit more on the weekends. I think Andy spent a similar amount of time.

Was there anything particularly challenging about the AMIGA port?

Everything! It was my first brush with a lot of Amiga features such as sprites and bobs. I had already done *Tenebra 1* and *2* on Amiga, but they were relatively simple games with only one bitplane and no real movements on the screen. It was a steep learning curve.

In addition to the game source code, I also had to write a rather elaborate Python script that took Andy's artwork from

Promotion, and created the intro, game-over, and UI screens. This tool also extracted the sprites, bobs, tileset, and colour registers; and created the level data.

Andy also had to learn Promotion NG and recreate all the artwork, while taking advantage of the extra power the Amiga gave us.

The Amiga version also had one of the most difficult bugs I have ever hunted in my 25-year career as an engineer. Because of an off-by-one mistake, if Ooze exited a certain screen as a certain chomper was closing, in the next screen, when it passed a certain hanging chain, it got killed by the chain. It happened very rarely, and it was a real challenge to find its root cause.



Ooze: The Escape

Haplo — 2023 / £free to download

Specs : AGA Amiga including TheA500 Mini, Supports PAL and NTSC.

Ooze is a blob that has become fed up of sitting in a glass jar in the laboratory, and wants out. It manages to dissolve the glass jar, but can you help it navigate through the many rooms of the laboratory to safety?

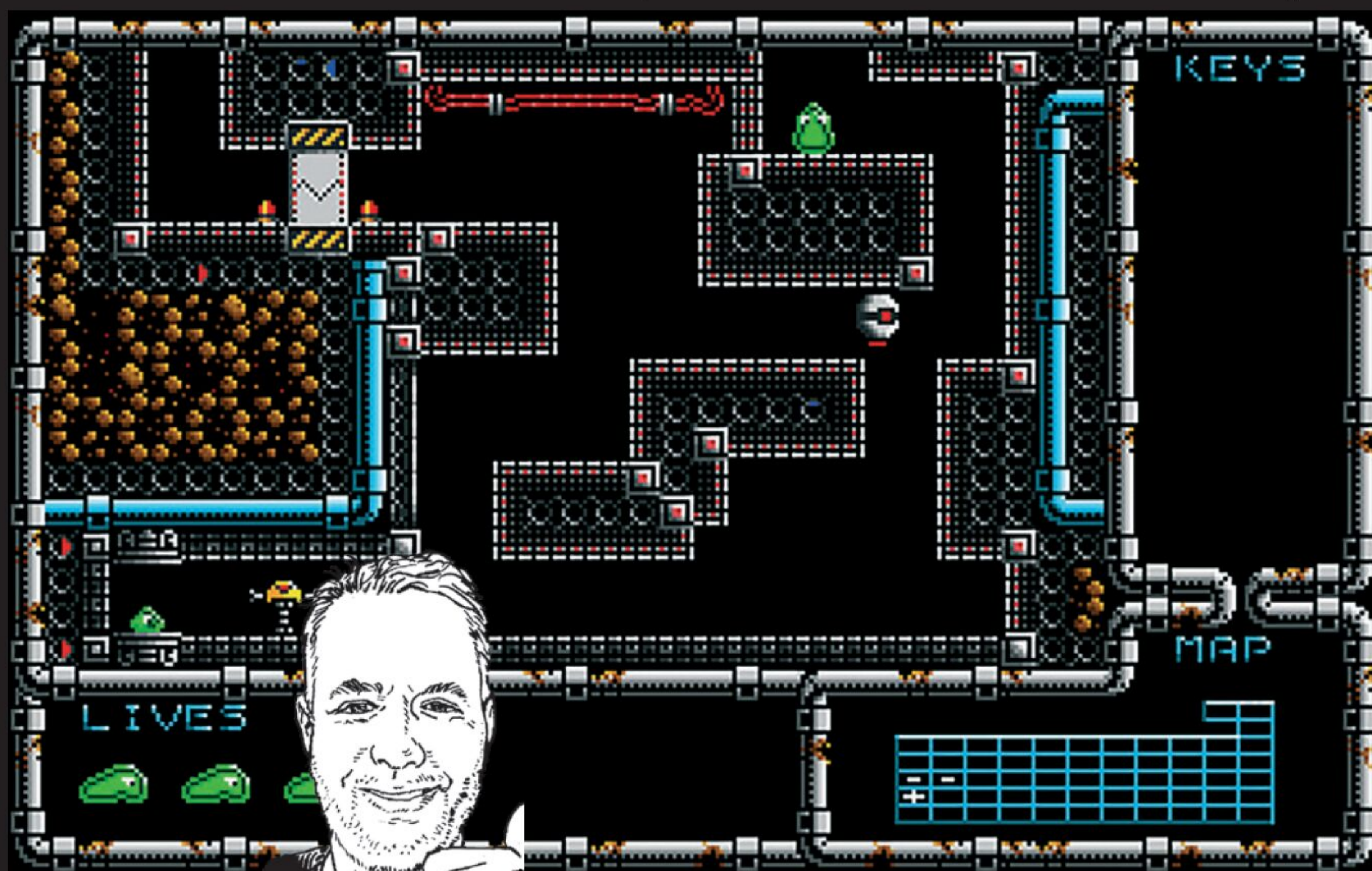
Roaming around the rooms are a number of hazards, obstacles and nasties that could dissolve you into the laboratory floor with the slightest misjudgment. Guillotines lift and drop, piping hot steam escapes in burts from cracked piping, and robotic guards patrol back and forth. Your route must be planned and well executed, or you will find yourself being part of the floor (or ceiling).

One thing going for Ooze is its gravity-reversing powers, allowing it to stick to the floor or ceiling on request to help navigate past all these hazards.

Not all rooms are accessible, with some blocked by coloured force fields. A key of the corresponding

colour must be picked up and dropped off at the computer terminal to disable the force-field and gain access to the areas behind.

An on-screen map helps you guide Ooze through the labarynth of over 50 rooms, and out into the big wide world!



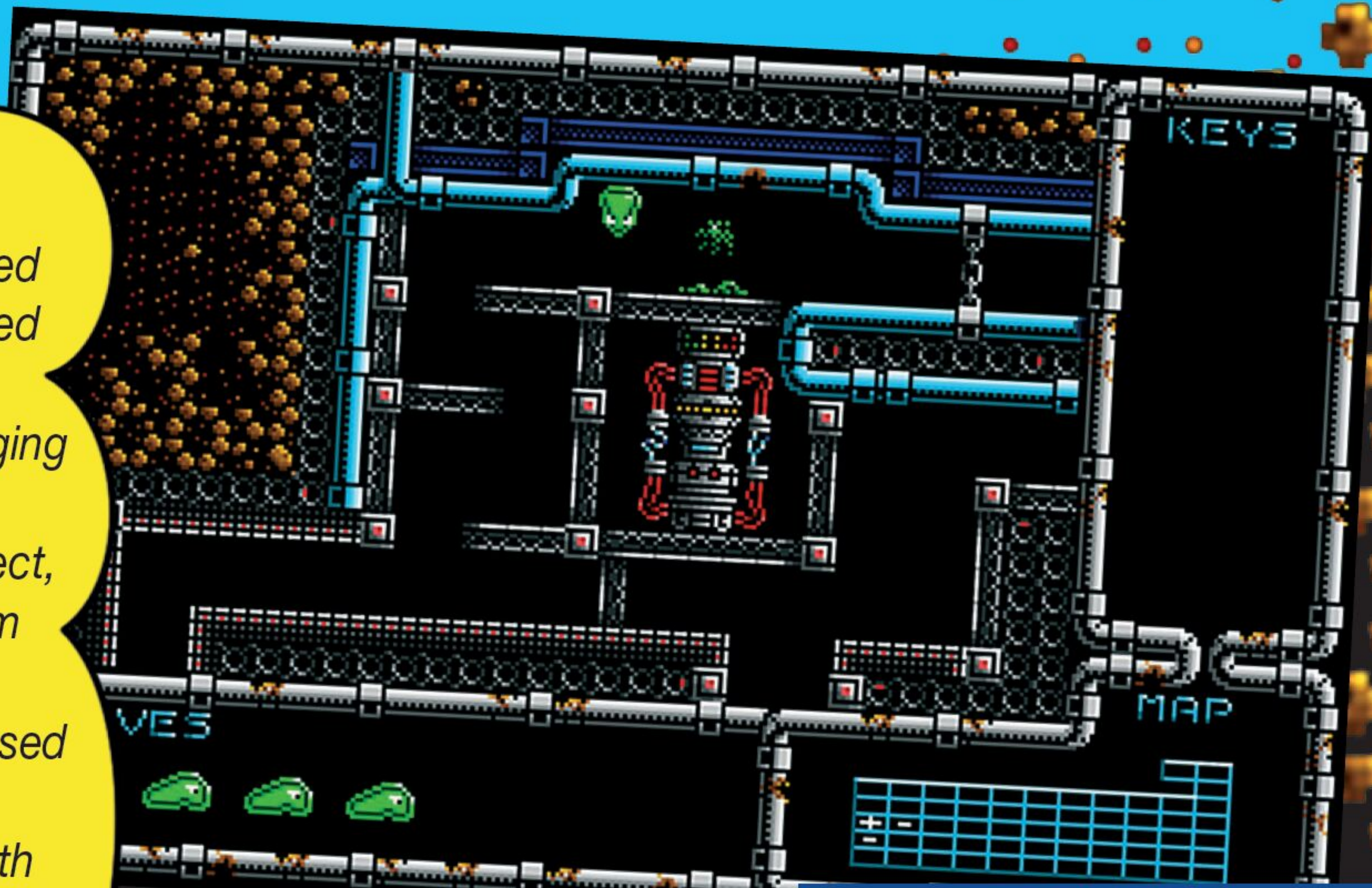
This is an immensely fun and playable game, and credit must go to Andy Johns for the original design. Whilst switching gravity is not a new concept (VVVVV 2010), it is still unusual and takes a bit of getting used to. However, the difficulty level is perfect, giving you that magic blend of frustration and addictiveness, and you'll get that little bit further with every game. Haplo has done a brilliant job converting this to the Amiga, shedding all its Spectrum-ness with beautiful graphics and a toe-tapping soundtrack, which I prefer to play along with than the FX. The only disappointment is when you escape the lab and it comes to an end. Perhaps Haplo will do a Tenebra and give us a sequel ;).



Get the game here



Ooze is a brilliant game that looks quite impressive with its high-resolution graphics for the enhanced Amiga edition. You never feel rushed to plan your moves around each screen, but while the gravity-changing gimmick takes a short while to get used to, once you master this aspect, you'll find immense fun oozing from screen to screen. The minimap tracker, additional keys, and increased map felt like great quality of life improvements, increasing the length considerably. Yet while it can be over quite quickly with perseverance, Ooze is a game that I would happily recommend if you want something more relaxed that will keep you entertained for a few sessions.



PRESENTATION 80%

A lack of options but a nice title screen and the mini-map is a great addition.

GRAPHICS 85%

Excellent use of colour and incredible detail have vanquished any remnant of the ZX Spectrum original.

SOUND 81%

A thumping soundtrack pairs with the gameplay and there are some decent, if annoying FX which can be switched off.

HOOKABILITY 87%

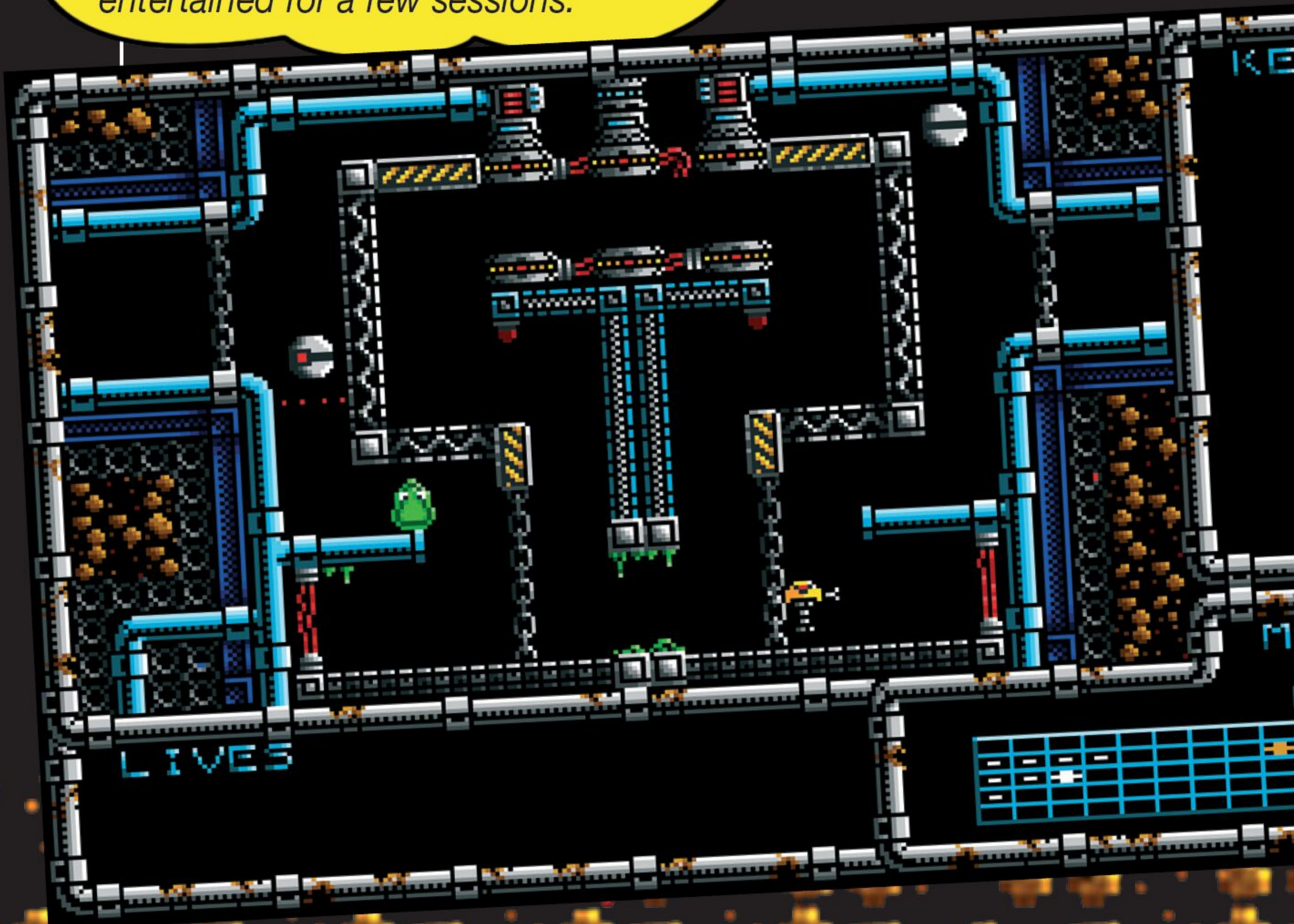
Once you grasp how to defy gravity, you'll get immersed instantly.

LASTABILITY 84%

It will take you some time to escape the lab, but once you have, there isn't much variance to pull you back for more.

OVERALL 85%

An extremely fun game that oozes class and polish.





AMIGA

Art

Simon Butler

The nights are fast drawing in and Autumn is upon us, so it's time to wrap up warm and make our way to the gallery to see what new submissions have found their way into these hallowed halls.

I must hasten to add that one of this month's

entrants was kind enough to allow me to print off a superb piece of their work that now hangs high on my wall over my desk. Sadly, it was created on the "other" 16-bit machine, so you'll have to hunt it down online. Let's step inside and peruse the pixels.

1: The Explorers : Gordian Neumann aka Critikill 2023

If I was forced to find fault with what is otherwise an awesome piece of work, I'd have to say that the mouse's head is, for me anyway, rather far away from his shoulders.

I know it's a fantasy piece, and mice aren't astronauts, but it niggled at me.

Other than that, this is a superbly crafted submission with two brave cosmonauts either getting ready to set off on their travels or just returning home.

The colours, the level of detail, and the hellishly high standard of execution on display make you almost forget this is something plucked from the imagination of a genius, and not a photograph.

Sorry for being a pedant; I just had to say something.



2: The Engineer : Made 2023

There is a great power and quiet majesty about this superb rendering.

The vastness of space unfolds before the figure sat at the desk. Spheres roll through incredibly crafted clouds, between stars and swirling galaxies, and darkness looms to the right, bleak and impenetrable.

Yet high in the left corner is the promise of light. The curves in the heavens are gentle and sensuous, the details are precise and innumerable, and the composition magnificent.

This could almost be a still from a movie, and would that it were, for it hints of things you wish to know. It is filled with mystery, redolent of our quest for knowledge and our constant looking to the void. Truly magnificent.



3. The Engineer : Made 2023

While being compositionally stunning and amazingly well crafted, I just have to say that there is something genuinely disturbing about this forest.

I know that is the intention and top marks for achieving that goal, but damn! if those colours don't give me the heeby jeebies.

The twisted finger-like roots that are clawing upwards from the ground only add to the eldritch vibe that permeates this entire image.

The distant castle seems perched on top of some other more organic construction that waits like a vast shadowy obstacle before the willowy female shape.

She stands poised and defiant, her breath whispering from her lips in the frigid night air. A great piece of work; genuinely otherworldly and unnerving.



4: Don't Shit on my Grave : Kay Poprawe 2022

Here we have the talented chap whose work adorns my wall: a veteran from the development scene and as skilled an exponent of the pixel craft as you could wish to find.

I apologise for the rather salty language in the title, but when the image is as evocative as the example here, who cares? We're all adults.

Two oozing pumpkin heads stand sentinel either side of the gravestone as some wretch claws his way through the earth to freedom. Twisted branches tear at the night sky, and the night is filled with the cold glow of the moon.

Atop the tilted stone sits a baleful-eyed raven, voiding itself as the undead creature tears itself free.

A thoroughly dark and creepy image for those nights when the shadows are long and filled with evil portent. A hellishly great way to wind up our visit.





TEST

Specs: Amiga AGA with 2megs of RAM and a 14mhz 68EC020.

GAME X

hitchhikr SoftWorks - 2023
(Free/Donation)

The X68000 was a home computer created by Sharp Corporation in 1987 and sold only in Japan. It was a powerhouse of a

machine, but expensive and unknown in the West.

Doujin was the equivalent to indie or homebrew in Japan. The

vast majority of Doujin titles were developed by home users and then given away for free across bulletin boards as a way of cutting their teeth for real game development. *GameX* is just one of the stand-out titles from the X68000's indie past, released into the wild back in 1988 with no official story, box art, or control documentation.

It's a straightforward, side-scrolling shooter with colourful graphics and fast-paced action. The objective is an all-familiar story, as you pilot a run-of-the-mill spaceship armed with a plethora of upgradable weapons, fighting off wave after wave of enemies to attain the highest score. The game is played out over a single level, and thus no end-of-level boss characters to destroy.

In addition to enemy fire, asteroids must also be avoided which also break up when hit, adding to the number of flying objects you need to avoid. Thankfully, upgrade spheres arrive in droves to ensure you have a fighting chance to continue for as long as possible.



I've never had the pleasure of playing anything on the Sharp X68000, but if this is anything to go by, I won't be rushing out to test its indie back catalogue. I'm sure it has nostalgia value for X68000 fans; however, this is no R-Type, and after playing Reshoot Proxima 3 this

month, this is a real come down to earth! On the plus side, the sprites are colourful and well detailed, and scrolling is smooth with no slowdowns when the action hots up. However, the gameplay is rather bland with no variation and lacks excitement, partially down to the lack of a background music track to accompany the gameplay. One thing it has got going for it is lastability, as it is hard as nails, but I found the power-up system a little hit-and-miss as to what you get, so it was hard to get any sense of progress or achievement.



Get the game here



SCORE 040860 HISCORE 040860 106



As an x68000 port, I have to applaud the accuracy; however, that alone doesn't make this a solid

game for me. There are no stage bosses, or indeed levels, to liven the challenge, so just too little substance here to make this a title I'd want to play for long periods, outside of hitting a high score for competitive reasons. Excellent sound effects aside, the distinct lack of background music is also a disappointment, and it feels like it deserved a deluxe enhancement worthy of the Amiga. Regardless, if you enjoy the genre, you'll find something of interest here, but the other shoot-em-up in this very issue is light years apart from this.

PRESENTATION 69%

Basic menu system and title screen, and unclear power up system.

GRAPHICS 73%

Pixel-perfect port of the x68000 game but lacks variety.

SOUND 70%

Fantastic SFX, only let down by a lack of other sound throughout

HOOKABILITY 73%

Standard control scheme makes it very easy to pick up and start achieving hi-scores.

LASTABILITY 58%

Very limited in scale and scope; after 10 mins, you'll have seen everything.

OVERALL 69%

A nostalgic revival of a homebrew game for a niche system, but lacks the substance and variety to hold your attention for long.

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AMIGA Bookshelf

Andrew Fisher puts another book onto his Amiga bookshelf, looking at the second volume of a series we first covered in issue 8.

From Vultures To Vampires Volume 2 – 2005-2010

Authors: David J Pleasance & Trevor Dickinson

RRP: € 40 £35 / \$45 (Hardback)



Back in issue 8, we looked at the first volume of David and Trevor's comprehensive look at the Amiga history after the bankruptcy of Commodore in 1994.

Volume 1 covered the first ten years and the multiple companies that tried to revive the fortunes of the Amiga. This new volume takes up the story in 2005, with Hyperion developing Amiga OS4 and Amiga

Inc. looking to leverage new hardware (and finance).

The book is split into seven chapters. The first six deal with a single year each – stretching from 2005 until 2010.

Chapter 1 is "The circle of life: Happy 20th Birthday, Amiga!", and deals with the woes of MorphOS, the continued lack of new hardware to run AmigaOS on, and the growth of emulation.

Chapter 2 – "Getting

better? It can't get no worse?", saw former Amiga Inc. CEO, Gary Hare, in arbitration against the company, which then dramatically launched litigation against Hyperion – just as Hyperion ended the year by sending out the final update of OS4.0.

Chapter 3, "Powered up", discusses topics such as Amiga Inc. pondering sponsorship of a stadium. Will ACube be allowed to supply OS4 with its Sam hardware, renamed The Red One in a clever advertising campaign?



Read all about the X1000.

With Chapter 4, “Swimming Against the Tide”, Apple takes over the supplier of key PowerPC hardware in the shape of PA Semi. Amiga Anywhere 2 is on show with great promise, but it is not the real AmigaOS 5.0. MorphOS 2.0 was launched with a new look, AmiKit and VmwaROS looked good, and NewCo was formed.

Chapter 5, “Breakthrough”, covers the conclusion of the legal issues between Amiga Inc. and Hyperion - settled after the death of Amiga Inc.’s major financial backer, Pentti Kouri. A number of other technical projects kick off with renewed promise, while C64 Forever joined Cloanto’s Amiga Forever, and the online marketing campaign, “What is X?”, fuelled interest in the possibility of new hardware.

Chapter 6 covers 2010, when the AmigaOne X1000 was revealed. The Vintage Computer Festival at Bletchley Park in England proved a pivotal moment, with the X1000 publicly booting Amiga OS 4.1 for the first time.

Chapter 7, “Commodore Revisited”, looks back to the complicated and confusing transfers of the other Commodore trademarks, and ends with Retro Games Ltd and its THEC64 and Amiga 500 Mini projects.

The book closes with adverts for the (incomplete) Amiga Global Alliance and some of its founders.

Overall, this was easier to read than the first volume, which was weighed down with long lists of hardware specifications. This

volume does have some tough threads to follow, such as the legal actions, but the book does a good job explaining them (even if, in places, it does resort to conjecture rather than evidence).

There are plenty of screenshots, scans, and hardware images to look over, along with photos of many of the key players. Long URLs in the footnotes could have been made more accessible.

There is no doubt that this second volume lives up to its promise of cataloging the twists and turns that Amiga went through. The involvement of Trevor in co-writing the book does not blunt nor put any bias on its conclusions.

My one concern is, as before, that the original plans for a single volume have now stretched to three – making it a major financial commitment for fans to purchase all three and hampered by the long delivery times that accompanied its release. Hopefully, with the help of distributors, Look Behind You, the third volume will arrive in a timelier manner. It is still recommended reading for Amiga enthusiasts.



Every book must have an AMIGA ball pic!

Specs : OCS AMIGA 512K Chip RAM + 512K
Other RAM minimum.

Rogue Declan Zero

Nivrig - 2023
(\$4.99 download)



Sometimes, being a fan of older systems like the Amiga feels like being left out of the cool area of parties! You can see, with the latest generation, new genres coming through, new concepts and cinematic gameplay, the likes of which we could only have dreamed of during Amiga's retail heyday. Despite being the vintage custodian of many long-forgotten franchises, there are times I do wish for some of these newer ideas to filter down to our beloved Amiga, now and again.

Thank goodness for Nivrig, once again, who takes this challenge head-on to provide us with a twin-stick rogue adventure that provides a taxing romp worthy of review.

So, in a nutshell, we have a bunch of wizards at it again (tsk, wizards, eh)! They can't just sit still, and whilst teaching 11-year-olds magic and mystery up in a Scottish castle, they've gone and accidentally opened the Hell Portals under the castle! Now it's up to you, brave (and possibly slightly gullible) Sir Declan, to search each



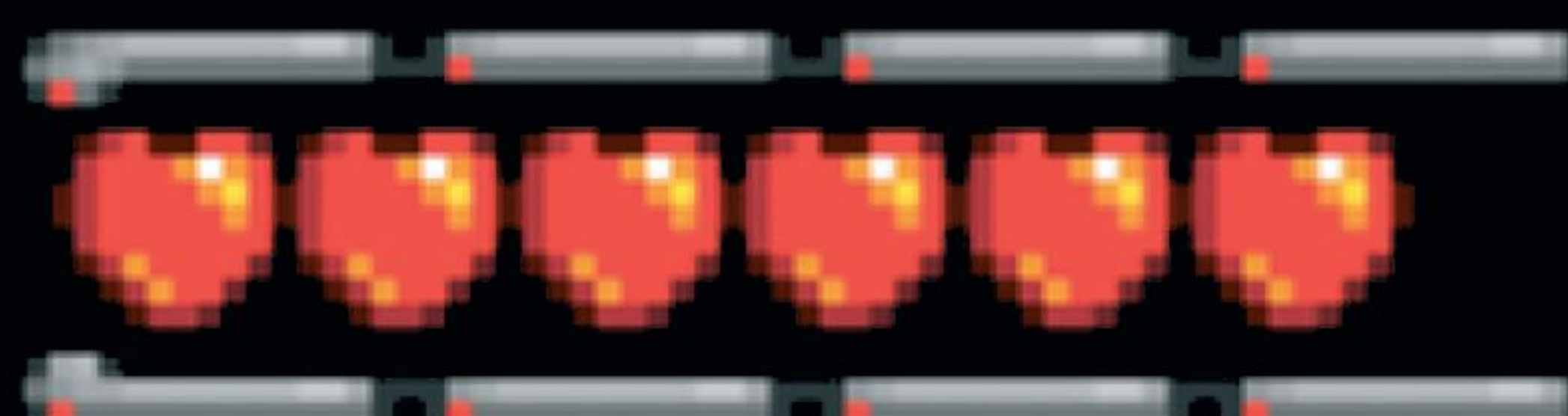
procedurally generated castle dungeon and find enough magical shards to access and close its portal. Got that? Good! Off you trot now, quick smart!

Dropping into a new game is an easy task. With your Caster Sword armed and ready, you'll be slowly working your way from room to room collecting potions, peasants, and coins for those necessary upgrades from ye ol' rippe offe shoppe before you find enough shards to open the barrier to the Hellgate and close down the portals one



Rogue Declan Zero is an absolute beast of a game, which could only be improved at

this point with secret bosses and collectables to unlock alternative level routes. The fact that it's already as good as it is, is a testament to the team's programming talents and wonderful attention to detail. Impossible to put down and a joy to replay every time. The online scoreboards are a wonderful touch, and there's a sheer feeling of this being a love letter to the genre that every AMIGA owner deserves to play. I can't recommend it enough!





by one.

It's worth mentioning that this title is optimised for Abstraction Games' twin-stick controller. However, this is not a requirement to play, as we've used both keys, joystick, and the A500 mini's excellent gamepad with no real issues. Although, if you do have twin sticks, you will you'll have an easier time with later levels.

Nivrig's previous AMIGA title, *Turbo Tomato*, was a well-polished affair, and this game is of a similar quality. A polished soundtrack (improved in the recent update) and solid SFX keep the atmosphere pumping as you slowly explore the dungeons, and the constant onslaught of enemies is randomised from room to room, which will keep you on your toes. In fact, the only respites you will get are in the shop or after each level. Every part of this game feels well thought out from start to finish. A lovely game concept, executed brilliantly and professionally put together.

Rogue Declan Zero

Nivrig - 2023
(\$4.99 download)

Get the game here



AmiGameJam Winner

AmiGameJam
create. inspire. play.
Sword & Sorcery

Rogue Declan Zero started life as an entry into the AmiGameJam Sword and Sorcery competition, and in our previous issue we awarded the competition version 5 'Swords' out of a maximum 5 by our very own Andrew Fisher. Since then, on the 17th September to be exact, Amiga Bill hosted a live stream on Twitch to discuss and play the competition entries, but more importantly, chair the judging and decision of the winners. In addition to organiser,

Amiga Cammy, the judging panel comprised of NAG_Graham (Amiga Twitch streamer and leader of the Norwich Amiga Group), 10Marc (YouTuber, 10 Minute Amiga Retrocast), and The Bard.

Amiga Bill does a fantastic job of sewing together the comments and humour from an eclectic bunch and making a very entertaining show, and he didn't disappoint on this occasion. Amiga enthusiasts and developers in the audience, meanwhile, are engaging in comments and side-discussion also, so for around four hours,

this really

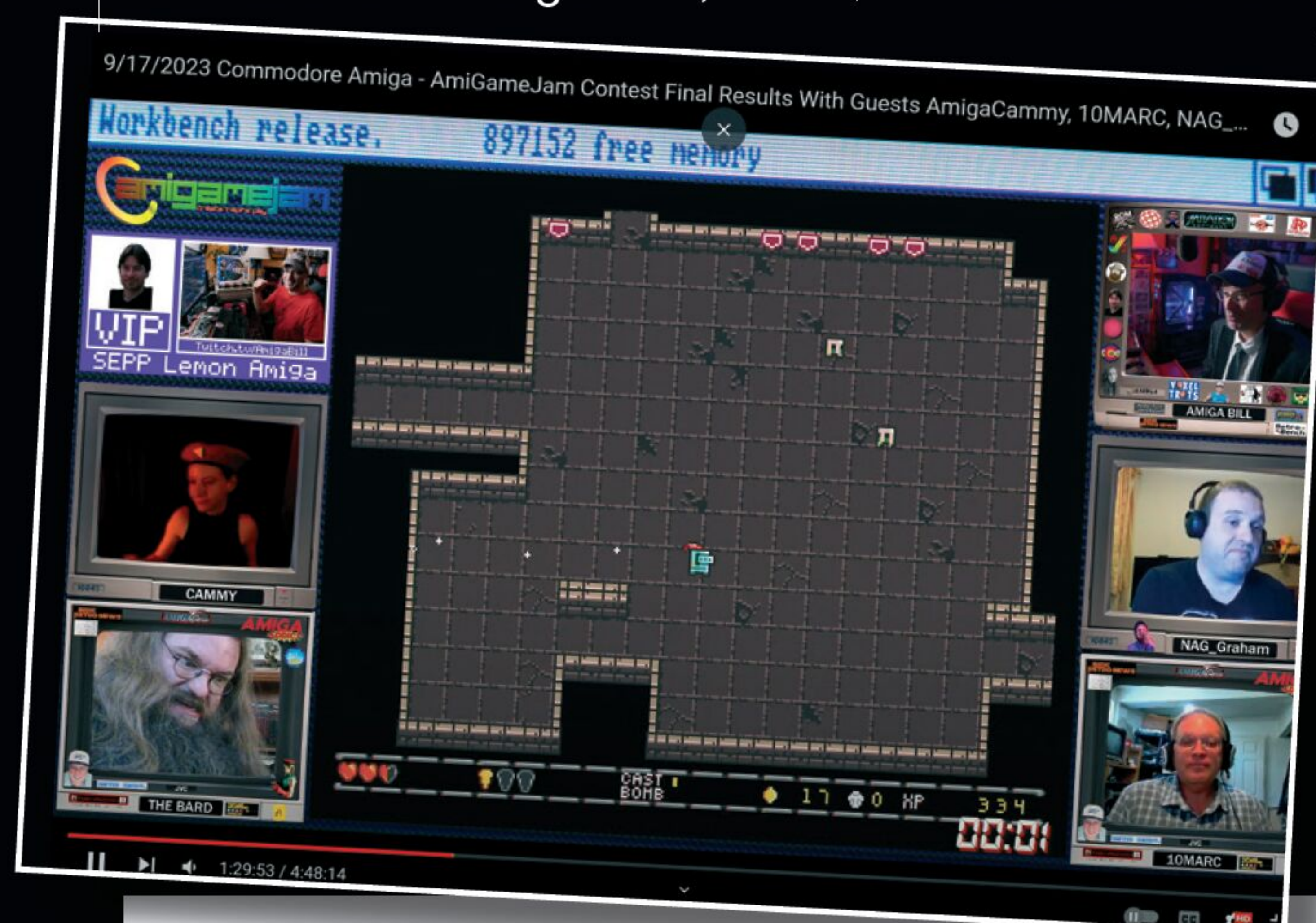
was the place to be in Amiga land.

Of the nine entries, the results were as follows:

1. Rogue Declan Zero
2. Rastan
(basementApe)
3. Roguecraft
(Badgerpunch Games)

We asked Nivrig if he had any feeling he might win the competition:

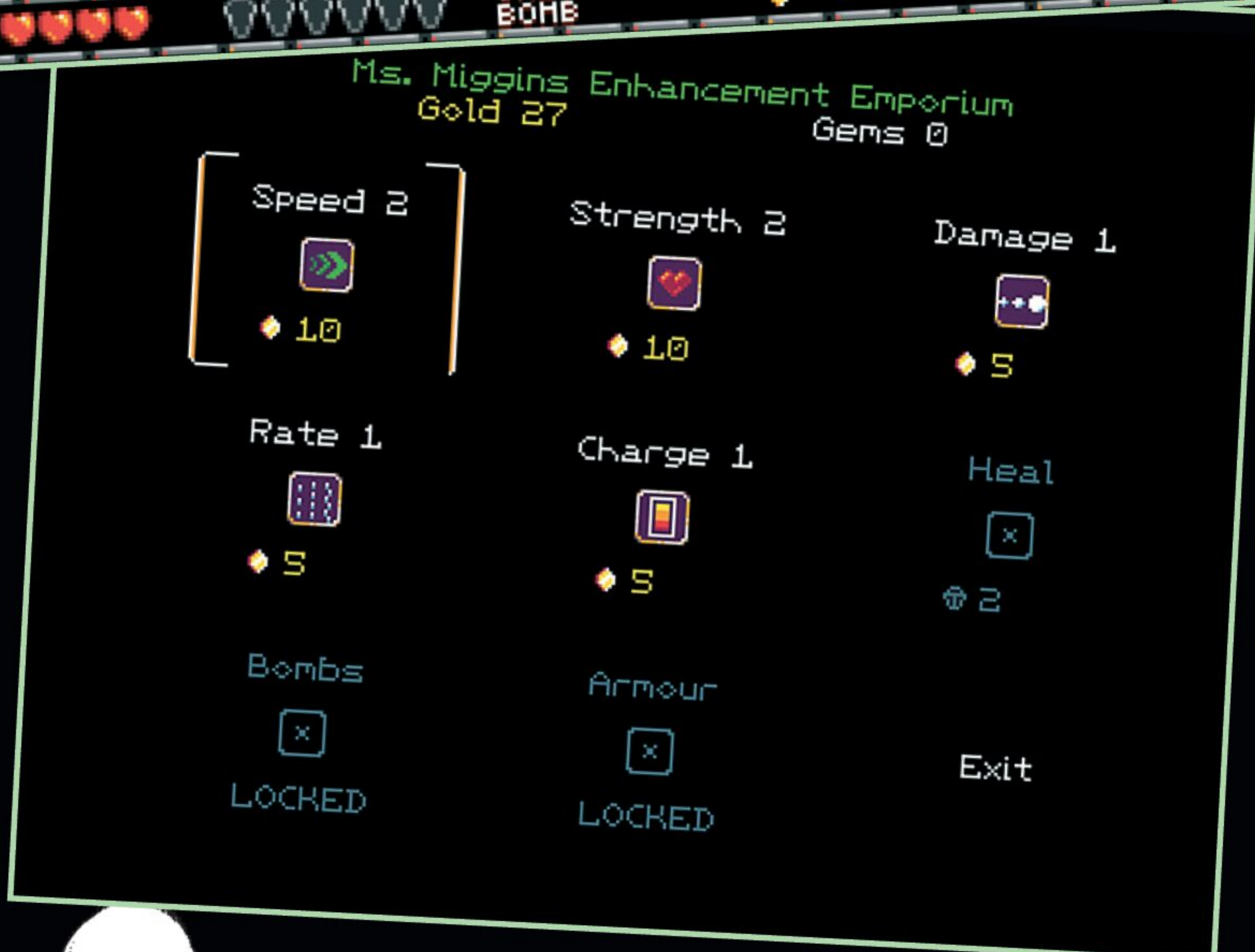
"Based on feedback on early versions I knew people were enjoying it even then, and it's a genre you don't get much of on Amiga either, so I guess I felt there was always a chance of it being popular in the jam. However, I was never sure, as there were some quality entries to go up against! In the end, it was extremely close, with Rastan and RogueCraft just pipped by Rogue Declan in the overall and community votes respectively. I think if either had been further along in development, the results would have been different. I also rated The Last Dungeon and Caravandalf highly, though clearly unfinished. Keep an eye on those..."





The jam entry was tasty, and now Nivrig has poured extra sugar on top. After the cartoon chaos

of Turbo Tomato, the diminutive Declan and his enemies are another cute horde. I loved the idea of using the shards to fight the portals. The dual stick controls will be the best way to play this, but even on keyboard it is a lot of fun. The new modes have made a good game even better; the unusual Reverse mode is such a clever idea, and the multiplier mechanic adds even more challenge long-term. How far can you go in what is destined to become a classic?



Chris raved about this, but when I started playing, I couldn't really see what the fuss was about. I hadn't been sure what to expect... turns out it's Robotron 2084-meets-Gauntlet-meets-RPG-lite. All tried-and-trusted concepts, but as I strolled around the rather quiet dungeons, opening chests and shooting the few creatures wandering

about, I wasn't really feeling it. Once I got to level four, though, it all changed. Creatures start firing back, new ones are added as you progress, and the challenge really ramps up. The graphics and sound are fine but nothing special, but that doesn't matter because you'll be lost in the action. Stick with this one, it's a real grower!

PRESENTATION 94%

Six game modes, a range of useful options, handy in-game prompts, and an online high score table.

GRAPHICS 87%

Super cute sprites and well-made backgrounds give this a unique flavour.

SOUND 89%

Great music and sounds add to the atmosphere,

HOOKABILITY 93%

It's impossible to play for a short while; simple and addictive.

LASTABILITY 93%

Getting to deeper dungeons is compulsive in one mode, let alone six.

OVERALL 92%

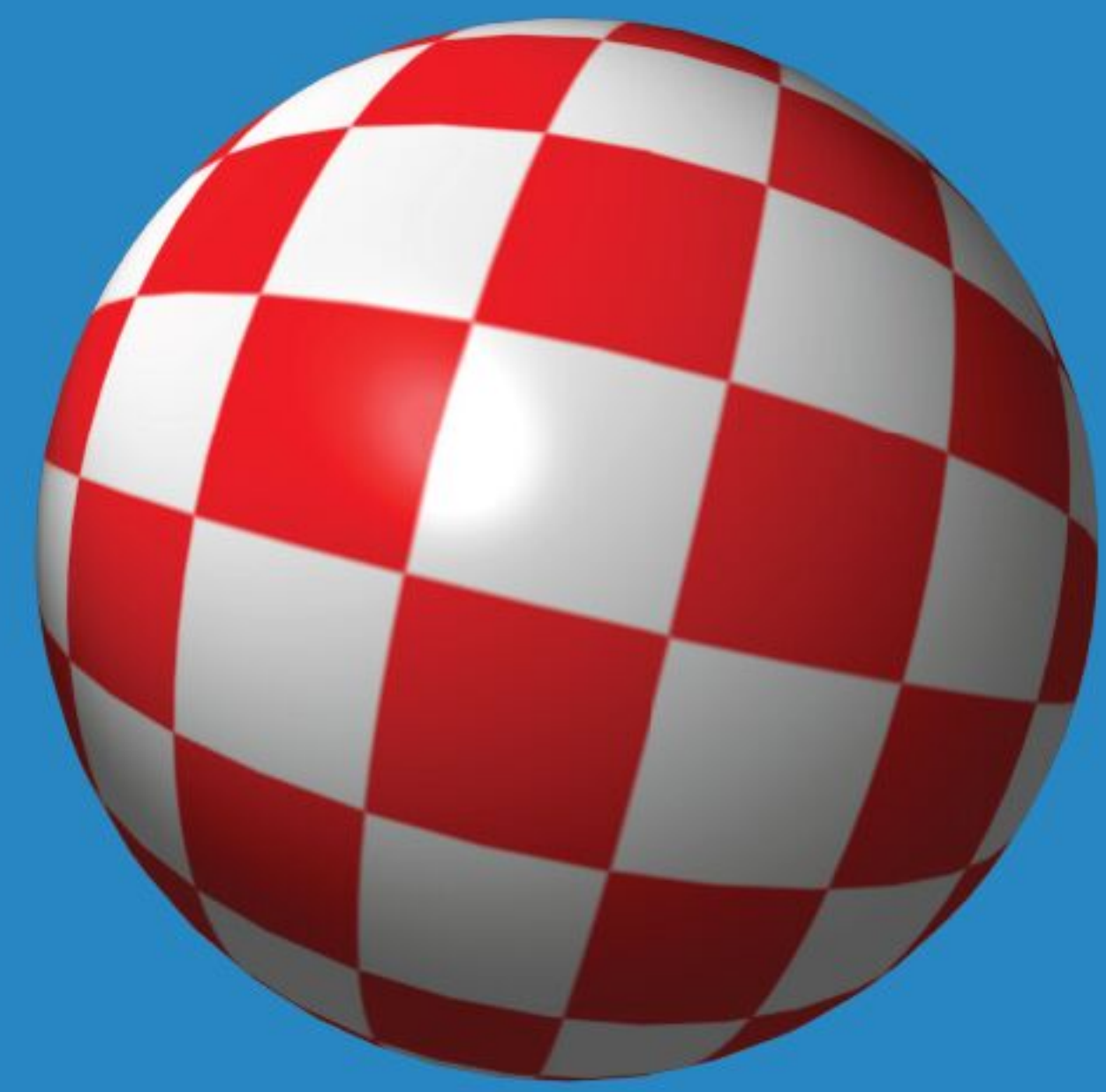
Frightfully addictive and taxingly torturous - a slow burner that goes from Zero to hero.

Theme Park

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Developer: Bullfrog Productions

Year of Release: 1994



Dominating the exciting world of Theme Park ownership is your goal in this strategy game from Bullfrog. But, if you were expecting spreadsheets, similar to Championship Manager, and mundane planning meetings, then you're in for a surprise. As a budding amusement park tycoon, you have full control to build your dream park from scratch, complete with all the imaginative, heart-stopping attractions you ever wanted as a kid (health and safety eat your heart out!). Rides range from Teacups and Haunted Houses to the most elaborate, stomach-churning rollercoasters you can dream of. But here's the twist: you must balance your inner child with the grown-up tasks of keeping your staff and customers happy. Make sure you place enough toilets, strategically scattered throughout the grounds, albeit cheekily next to those over-salted fries and very icy drinks stands. Humour is in abundance, and you can enjoy sadistic moments sending guests running to the nearest bathroom in a desperate search for relief, and let's not forget the hilarious sight of someone losing their lunch on a rollercoaster you designed.

Chris Thacker: Theme Park is the gift that keeps on giving, providing endless hours of amusement (pun intended). Its impressive visuals hold up well against its multiformat counterparts. The goofy, exaggerated sprites have a unique charm, portraying everything in a whimsical and comical art style, which adds more depth than intricately detailed sprites ever could. With a multitude of attractions and rides at your disposal, you can unleash your inner prankster by designing the wildest, most absurd roller coasters imaginable. Want a loop-de-loop that sends guests flying off into outer space? No problem!





The **ZZAP!** Interview



Our editor extraordinaire caught up with **Nivrig**, the man behind *Rogue Declan Zero*. Nivrig describes himself as “a big nerd from Northern Ireland, and I live a little way outside of Belfast with my family, a cat, and not enough old computers or bikes”.

After returning to AMIGA development in recent years, David Girvin (aka Nivrig) finally released his first complete game for the Amiga in the form of *Turbo Tomato*. Back in issue 2, it Sizzled, to rave reviews. What would he follow up with? The AmiGameJam competition would inspire him to more Sizzledom, and Mark caught up to find out how he got there.

MM - How did you get into game development for AMIGA?

It was making games that got me into computers in the first place! I started with BASIC around the age of 10 in the early 1980s, first on Sharp MZ80-K and BBC Micros at school, then on a VIC-20 and an Amstrad CPC 464 at home as time went on. I must have made 100 8-bit games like that, all of which are lost now, sadly. I got an Amiga quite late, around the middle of 1991, and really just kept going with that, though it did take a while to learn how to use the more advanced Amiga

architecture. In that period I started a few Amiga games projects but never finished any of them, apart from a couple of simple PD efforts in GFA BASIC (of all things). My brother also made a couple of Amiga games in Blitz BASIC, which found their way onto CU Amiga coverdisks. In late 1993, I started on what would eventually become *Turbo Tomato*, but after a few years that was parked as my Amiga interests turned to other things. I made mobile and PC games for a while (as a hobby), then got pulled back into the Amiga scene via attending Amiga Ireland. Rob Cranley ported my PC game, *Dodgy Rocks*, to Amiga in 2019, and then in 2020, I returned to Amiga development myself to finish *Turbo Tomato*.

MM - What was the inspiration behind *Rogue Declan Zero*? Is there any particular reason behind the game title?

Rogue Declan Zero started after a conversation

at Amiga Ireland 2023 with the team from Abstraction Games. They had a prototype controller for Amigas that supported dual analogue sticks and eight buttons over one DB9



port. I offered to make a game specially for the new controller, if they made me one of my own. They were generous enough to agree! A twin-stick shooter was a natural fit, of course, and I was aware of the AmiGameJam, so opportunistically chose a Swords & Sorcery theme. Thus, *Rogue Declan* was born.

The name is layers of intertwined references! Both *Rogue Declan Zero* and another Amiga game

The brilliant Turbo Tomato (2021).

I had been working on, *R/DECLAN*, have a shared origin in a PC game I was prototyping before starting back on *Turbo Tomato* in 2020. It was a sci-fi, procedurally-generated take on the old VIC-20 game “*Shamus*”, hence Declan, and “R” to make it a play on “Our Declan”, a local turn of phrase. *R/DECLAN* was meant to be an arcade adventure, but somehow distilled out only the adventure parts into an RPG-like (games do this sometimes), and so *Rogue Declan* is the action-oriented other half of the coin. Procedural generation in a swords and sorcery setting leads naturally to thoughts of *Rogue*, and “Rogue” handily referenced the “R” in *R/DECLAN*, rightfully linking the games to each other.

“Zero” was added because I originally had a few months to make the game, so it would have been very stripped back and I wanted to leave room for a “Rogue Declan One” later on. However, with the jam extension, *Rogue Declan Zero* was effectively “Rogue Declan 0.9”, and the post-jam update makes it “Rogue Declan One”. But I decided to keep the name anyway because it’s a little unusual and interesting. You’re not the first to ask about it!



How long did it take you to write the game?

Development started in February 2023 and the jam version was submitted at the end of July, so six months of nights and weekends (mostly nights). The updated and expanded post-jam version took another couple of months on top of that. It’s written mostly in C, and I had a base framework from *R/DECLAN* that I could bend into shape, so it was quite quick to develop.

Getting DJ Metune and H0ffman to collaborate was quite an achievement. How did you manage that?

I’d met H0ffman at events a couple of times and we’d got on well, plus we had been in contact in different online groups for

a while before that. He had previously offered to do the sound effects on my next project, whatever it was, because he had seen how much I hated doing audio work when I was doing the effects on *Turbo Tomato*! I’d worked with DJ METUNE before on *Santa Rocks* and *Turbo Santa* and just asked if he had any tracks that might work for *Rogue Declan*. He went above and beyond though, and created three brand new tracks for the game (two in the jam version). Amazing. The Amiga development community is full of people with different skills who are eager to get involved. Just ask, though be considerate of people’s time, and it’s always best if you’re bringing something to the table yourself.

DEMOSCENE

Legends

Demos, like other forms of creative art, will outlast their creators and be enjoyed by generations to come. Hopefully, they will be looked back upon, in decades to come, in the way historians study Picasso or comb through archive interviews of the Beatles. Not all will carry the same significance, of course. Some will, unfortunately, always be forgettable, others impressive, and the very best will be quite remarkable and totally justify the reasons we remember them today. Welcome to 'Demoscene Legends'. I am your host, Judge Drok, and today, along with ex-scener and Technical Director at Activision, Paul Robinson, plus Photon of Scoopex and Teo of Rebels, we remember how Mental Hangover changed the scene.

Mental Hangover by Scoopex, April 1990

Code: Slayer / GFX: Reward / Music: Uncle Tom

In the year that the demoscene was accepted as UNESCO cultural heritage in The Netherlands (following Finland, Germany, and Poland), we celebrate one of the

landmark releases from the golden era of the Amiga demoscene.

A demo created by just three people, combining musical, artistic, and programming skills - each impressive in its own right but even more special when combined together with a fourth ingredient that is difficult to replicate by inspired onlookers. That fourth ingredient is 'magic', and is only created when the right people come together at the right time. Mental

Hangover is one instance where this 'magic' was made over 33 years ago. The same leap back in time upon its release would have taken you back to 1957 (pause for a moment and let that sink in). Amiga demos can impress in many different ways, from showing the programmers' dexterity and understanding of the machine, while at the same time forcing them to explore their inner soul to come up with new ideas that haven't been seen countless times (originality is after all a close runner-up to magic). Programmers have to impress more than just the mathematicians in the room. Digital art, and dazzling designs that will feed the eyes, and just

I have vivid memories from the Easter Conference where M.H was released. Gurk said, "He'll never finish in time!" Correct - my source disk got corrupted! A huge party, with hundreds of teens running around. I was in a calm room drinking lots of Coke, but we heard rumours of certain drunk Finns wreaking havoc. I didn't meet Slayer & Reward on the day - or most groups. In the big school, most groups hung out in their rooms. I met Havok/Ecstasy (who'd come over from the U.K. and did the logo for our future demo), plus members and contacts of Phenomena: SOS, Mafia, Top Swap, D-Mob, Dual Crew. The demo competition was held in a large crowded auditorium on a couple of big TVs. You couldn't really see the demos, though you heard them well. Entries weren't spread around before the competition, unlike the music compacts, so the first time I saw it properly was at home. A veritable barrage of inspiring parts over one great, long track which went a bit mental with the rapid scene changes, and just like that, the "trackmo" was born.

Photon of Scoopex

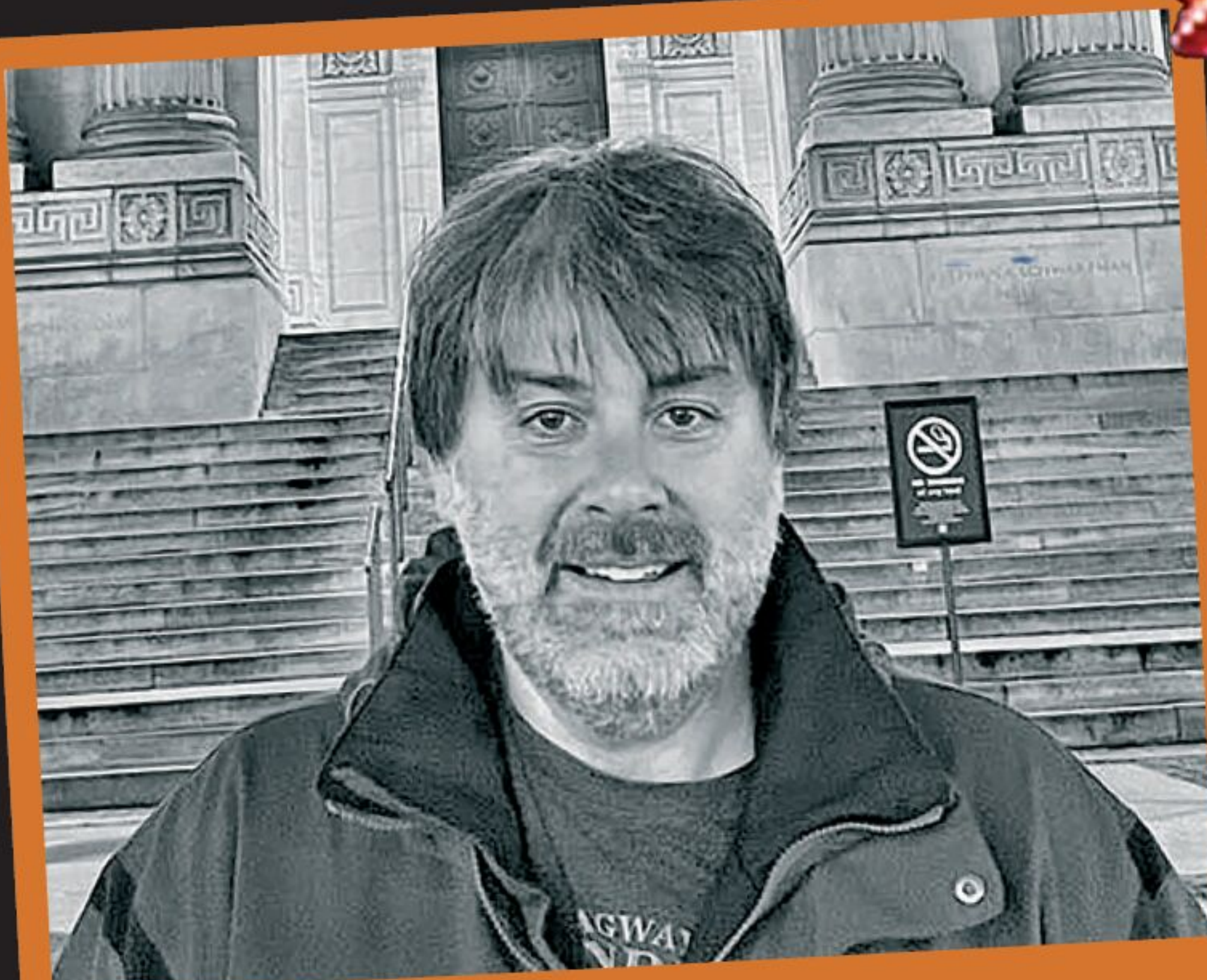


how do you create a 'soundtrack' a programmed routine in a way that would impress John Williams (American composer, conductor, and pianist) – in fact, could Mr. Williams add aural accompaniment to a coded effect in the way an Amiga scener could? An emotional, real-life on-screen event maybe, but creating music for a scrolling message and

making it moving and amusing? Perhaps not.
As we celebrate



this landmark achievement, let us mourn the loss of one of its creators, the artist Reward (Sami Vanhatalo), who sadly passed away in September 2020 at the young age of just 47. If you pick up this magazine 30 years after I write this, then I'm certain that Reward will be remembered and revered in the way I referred to in my introduction. Oh, and while you're here, why not play that disk one more time?



this demo might have made up three separate productions in the past, but by packing in so many high-quality effects, it really upped the ante for all other demo producers. This is now the bar you have to hit! Demos have always been works of art to me, and this one really cemented that for all to see.

Paul Robinson (ex-Spook of Digital)

TEO of REBELS remembers 'Mental Hangover'



TEO

JD - Do you remember seeing *Mental Hangover* for the first time?

TEO - When I first encountered this marvel on VHS (I only had a C64 back then, and my cousin taped a few Amiga demos and games for me), it was obvious that my next computer of choice would be an Amiga 500. The music was something out of this world (it still is), and unlike anything I'd heard before, but it still grew on me with each viewing. I was transported to a world of awe-inspiring digital artistry.

The demo pushed the Amiga 500's capabilities to its limit, showcasing breathtaking visuals and continuity of



effects, breaking the chains of the megademo concept once and for all. The fluidity reminded me of the music videos that I was watching all day long on MTV.

JD - What was so special about this demo?

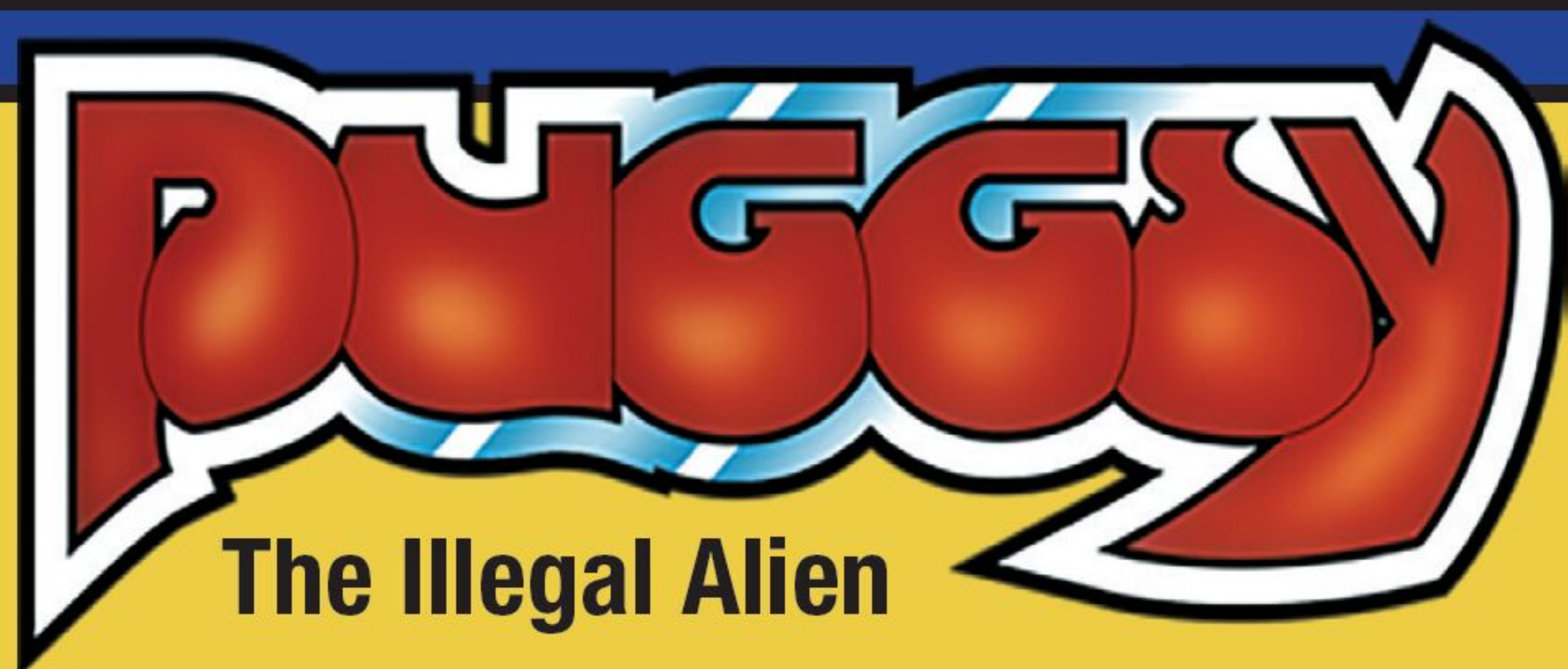
TEO - I was captivated by the sheer creativity and technical prowess on display, as the demo seamlessly transitioned effect after effect,

accompanied by the great 2D art from Reward; displaying a level of sophistication that was unparalleled at the time.

JD - What effect did it have upon the 'scene'?

TEO - The demo's impact was not solely visual and auditory; it ignited a passion for technology and creative expression within me. It also became a source of inspiration for many, and changed the A500 demos forever, transforming effects, graphics, and music into true digital art. To this day, Mental Hangover remains a vivid memory, reminding me of the profound influence technology can have on shaping our passions and aspirations. Many followed, refined, and perfected the art of trackmo.





MEMOIRS



AMIGA musician Tim Wright shares his memoirs on *Magician's Castle*, a game which never surfaced for the AMIGA but was instead released on the PC under a different name.

When people ask me “How did you get started in computer games?”, I quite often tell the tale of how I teamed up with Lee Carus (now Associate Development Director at FireSprite, Liverpool) and Alan McCarthy (now Technical Director at Electronic Arts, Stratford-Upon-Avon), after being introduced by one Terry Clarke.

I met Terry at a Liverpool computer shop called Bits and Bytes in the early '90s. He wanted to start a demo group. He wasn't a programmer,

artist, or musician, but was keen to learn programming and was desperate to start producing computer demos on the AMIGA computer.

To this day, I'm not sure how he knew Lee and Alan, but the three of us met up at Terry's house and he wanted us to contribute to the first 'Mindpower Designs' (his preferred demo crew name) demo.

We didn't really know what the demo would look like to begin with, but after some discussion, we decided to create a music demo disc. Much of the

work was already done in part, as I had a collection of unreleased AMIGA SoundTracker music just laying around, and with a single-screen music player where you could select which song to play, it was basically an instant release.

After a week or so, we had the demo working, and it was released to the world.

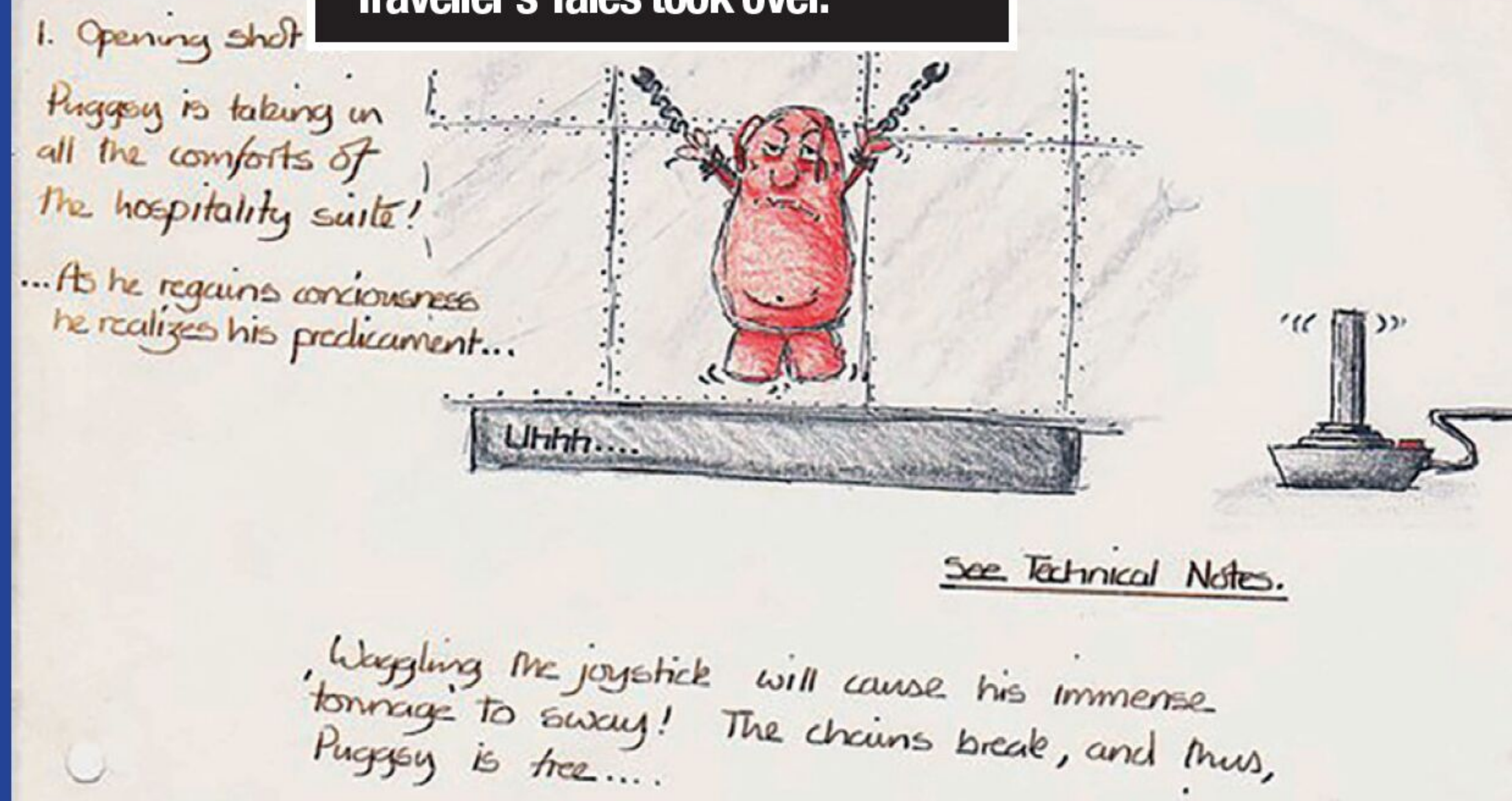
It was called *City Nights*¹, and was a simple music player with a scrolling message. It didn't make much of a splash in the demo world, but it was a toe in the water, at least.

Not long after, Lee and Alan formed their own demo group called 'Dionysus' and began work on a character-driven demo that would end up being *Puggs in Space*. As I recall, Terry wasn't that upset about it, and I've stayed in touch with him over the years. He was instrumental in bringing us together, and without that, I wouldn't have ended up working at Psygnosis, or at least I don't see a linear path without Mindpower Designs and Dionysus.

Anyhow, Lee and Alan



Original design for Puggsy before Traveller's Tales took over.



wanted me to contribute music and sound effects to this new demo. So, we met up and chatted about the storyline, and what Puggs would get up to in this demo. There was a lot to do, and the demo took several weeks to complete. I worked remotely, but we met up a few times at Alan's house to discuss things and see how well my music and sound effects fitted in with the demo.

I would eventually contribute to the demo under the name 'Jester Brothers International', as by this time, me and my brothers had begun coding up AMIGA demos of our own under that name, such as the Fillet the Fish series. 'Jester' would also lend the name to a future commercial endeavour under the name 'Jester Interactive', where we developed and produced quite a few games... but that's a long story, and not overly AMIGA related.

Anyhow, it's true to say that my previous pieces

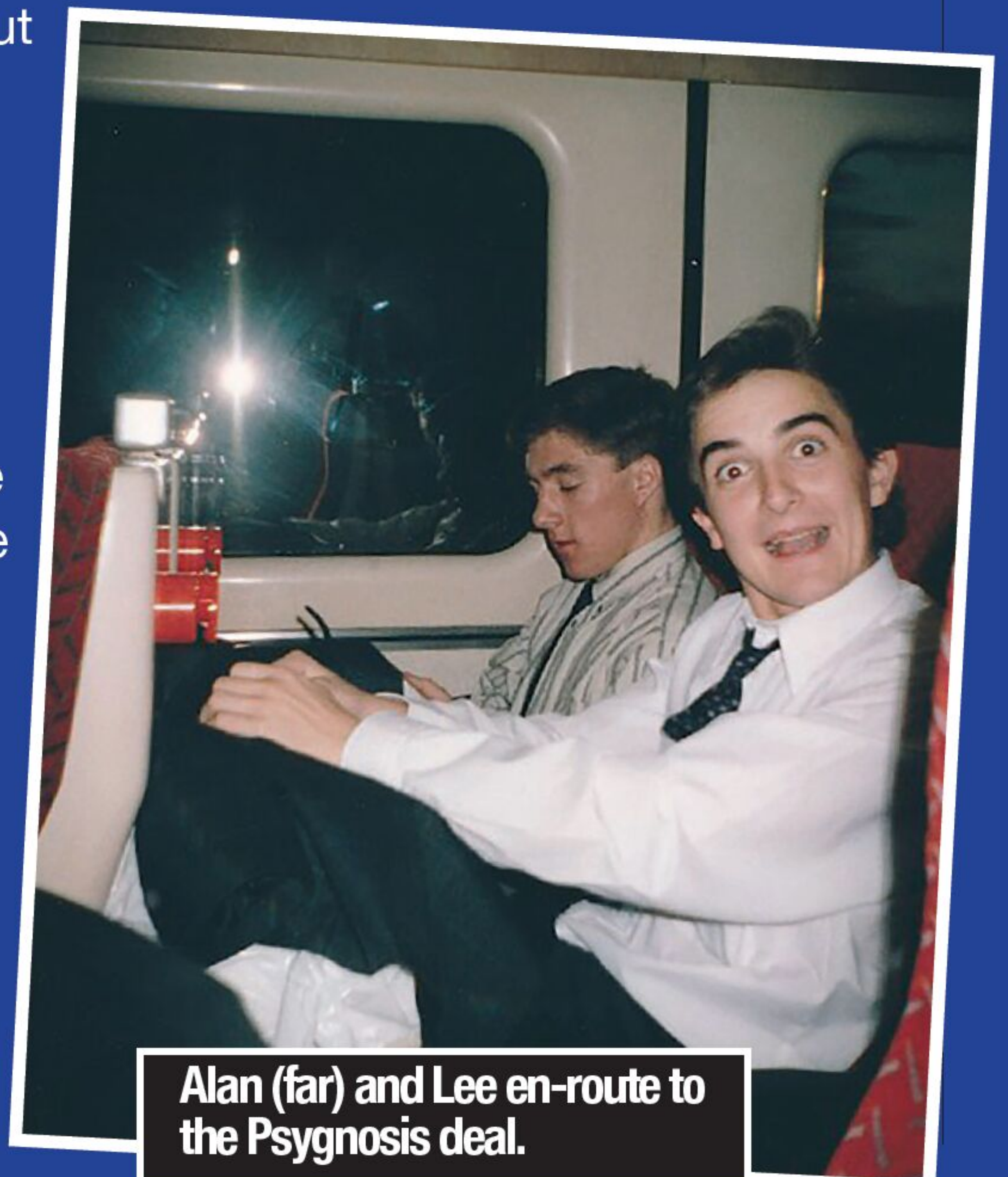
magazine have been centred around games and music, but this story is no exception. The preamble above is for people who may not have heard the history behind the *Puggs in Space* demo and how that would eventually lead to the *Puggsy* game being released by Psygnosis on AMIGA and the MegaDrive and Mega CD Consoles.

Initially, it made sense for Psygnosis to take on me, Lee, and Alan to develop the game. We had a strong narrative about how the game would go, how it would look, and so on. However, a few months into the development, Ian Hetherington, CEO at Psygnosis, felt that we weren't really up to the task, or at least that the direction wasn't really where he saw the project going. He offered to buy us out and give the job to Traveller's Tales. We agreed, as he was also intent on offering

Lee and Alan full-time jobs, which was a pretty good recompense.

As for me, I wasn't left out. I was offered additional music work as a freelancer, composing for *Shadow of the Beast 2* to start with, and many more games besides, and I would only join Psygnosis full-time a year or so later.

Now, the irony is that even though Lee, Alan, and I had developed the character of Puggsy, and we'd had some say in the development of the game, I wasn't asked to create the audio. It would be Mat Furniss who was tasked with creating the music and sound effects. I believe this was because he had lots of experience composing music for the MegaDrive, with its unique FM chipset, and at that stage, I was only familiar with creating Commodore 64 and



Alan (far) and Lee en-route to the Psygnosis deal.

AMIGA music.

In another odd twist of fate, after the game had already been developed and released for the Sega machines, in 1993 it was decided to convert the game over to the AMIGA.

At this point, I was working full-time for Psygnosis, and I was asked to convert Mat Furniss' music over to the AMIGA. I thoroughly enjoyed doing this, as it was a technical challenge in the first instance, and the music was also rather excellent. It was a real joy to do the conversion, and Mat was really impressed with my work. It didn't go unnoticed



Puggs in Space Amiga Demo.

that the original 'Puggs in Space' music wasn't used in the MegaDrive game, so I added the theme to one of Mat's tunes as a musical refrain towards

the end of the Game Complete tune. I wasn't sure he'd notice, but he did... and he thought it was a lovely touch. However, I believe that due to the way the end credits were coded, it was never heard! I was also absent from the end credits, but as recompense, I did get pride of place at the start of the game, so that was a nice touch, too.

The original *Puggsy* AMIGA demo has been uploaded to YouTube, so you can check it out there if you've not seen it before, and there are many playthroughs of the game on the AMIGA and on the original MegaDrive.



Amiga Puggsy in-game screenshot.



City Nights Amiga Demo



Puggs in Space Amiga Demo



Puggsy, the game, played on the Amiga



AMIGA PARTY CULTURE

BY Judge Drokk

The 21st century has seen an extraordinary renaissance in the world of Amiga creativity. Art, music, either stand-alone or in new demos that defied the limitations of the hardware they run on. Time has not stood still in the world of the Amiga party, either. Through natural progression in technology or as a result of a worldwide pandemic, combined factors have transformed the party experience forever. In 'The times, they are a changin' Bob Dylan wrote, "Come gather 'round people. Wherever you roam, and admit that the waters around you have grown" ... and he wasn't talking about climate change. I'm Judge Drokk, and today I examine how that very notion can be applied to the Amiga party....

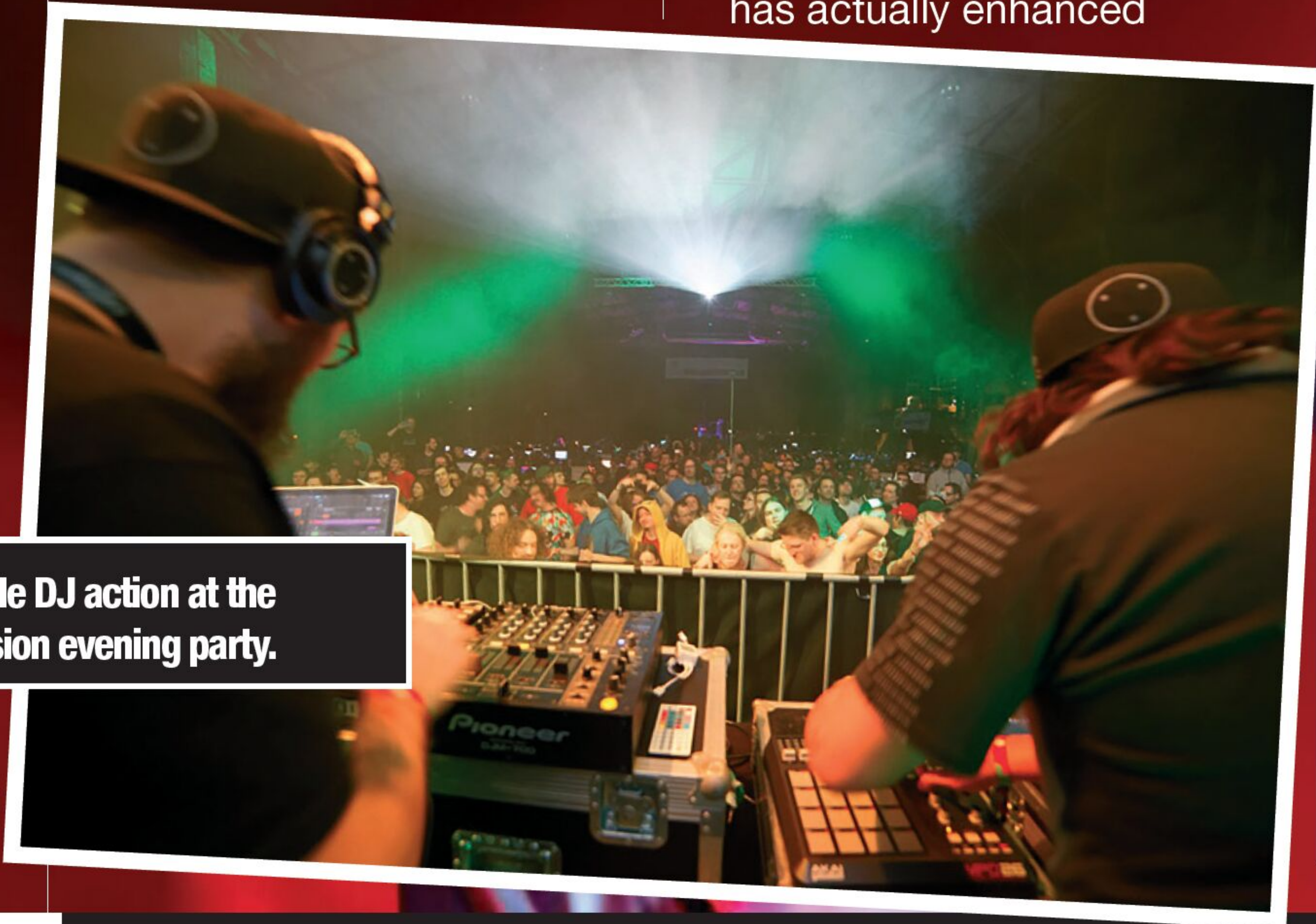
Over the last 30 years, the Internet has changed communication in ways previously only seen in science fiction movies. This, alone, could quite simply have removed the need to even hold physical demoscene parties at all. We can see and speak to anyone, at any time, from

our PC or smartphone. Competitions can be streamed live on Twitch and watched from the comfort of your armchair, and cash prizes can be instantly transmitted to your bank account. Thankfully, we still have physical events - the end didn't happen. Technology has actually enhanced

the party experience and widened the audience to global levels, which in turn heightened the impact and increased awareness of the physical event itself. Then the pandemic happened, the biggest impact on freedoms for almost 80 years. We came out of the other side, but would things be the same again? I spoke to Neil Thomas of RMC Retro, the proprietor of vintage computing and console museum, 'The Cave', and a corporate sponsor of 'Revision 2021', a party forced online as we were forced to stay at home...

JD - COVID-19 not only brought the physical demo party scene to a halt but proved just how resilient, in the face of adversity, the scene really

Double DJ action at the Revision evening party.



was, possibly changed forever by forcing it to expand online at a speed and scale it never had before. How do you see the evolution of the demo party in the post 'COVID-19' era?

RMC - I sometimes feel there is a resistance to streaming, and that attending the party in person is still considered by some to be the "correct" way to enjoy a demo party, but I think that mindset is completely compatible with streaming. In streaming the party you can reach a far bigger audience, and if streamed well, physical attendance becomes the aspiration for that audience. The party becomes the pilgrimage they want to someday make, but the exposure of streaming inspires new talent who otherwise might not have recognised the scene.

JD - How important is the role of sponsorship in today's large-scale, international, yet still passionate fan-driven events such as Revision?

RMC - It really depends on how the organisers want to present their party. There is a huge opportunity to reach and inspire a bigger audience than ever, thanks to streaming services. But, to present a party

well you need to invest in cameras, audio equipment, and computers, as well as people with the skills to make it work well. Sponsorship can help with these costs, but it also gives someone like me the opportunity to give back to a scene I've enjoyed from the sidelines for decades, and to associate with a party so that my audience might be more confident to see what it's all about. It's amazing how many people are unaware of the scene or are unaware of how accessible it is, and I'll do anything I can to help people discover it. Parties are the very best introduction.

JD - From a personal perspective, can you describe your historical interest in the Amiga demo scene and your perception of a demo party and indeed 'scener' during the years

when the Amiga was a contemporary machine?

RMC - I'm like many I know, someone who devoured demo disks and searched every public domain disk I could find for demos to enjoy on my Amiga. The scene itself was a dark, mysterious world where the cool kids hung out and threw amusing insults at each other on wibbly text scrollers and did amazing things. I didn't have the first idea where the parties took place and how to get an invite. I'm certainly trying to make up for it now, though!



GFX on the big screen on Revision.



Background Photo: DJ at Revision

Hoffman thrills the crowd
at Revision.



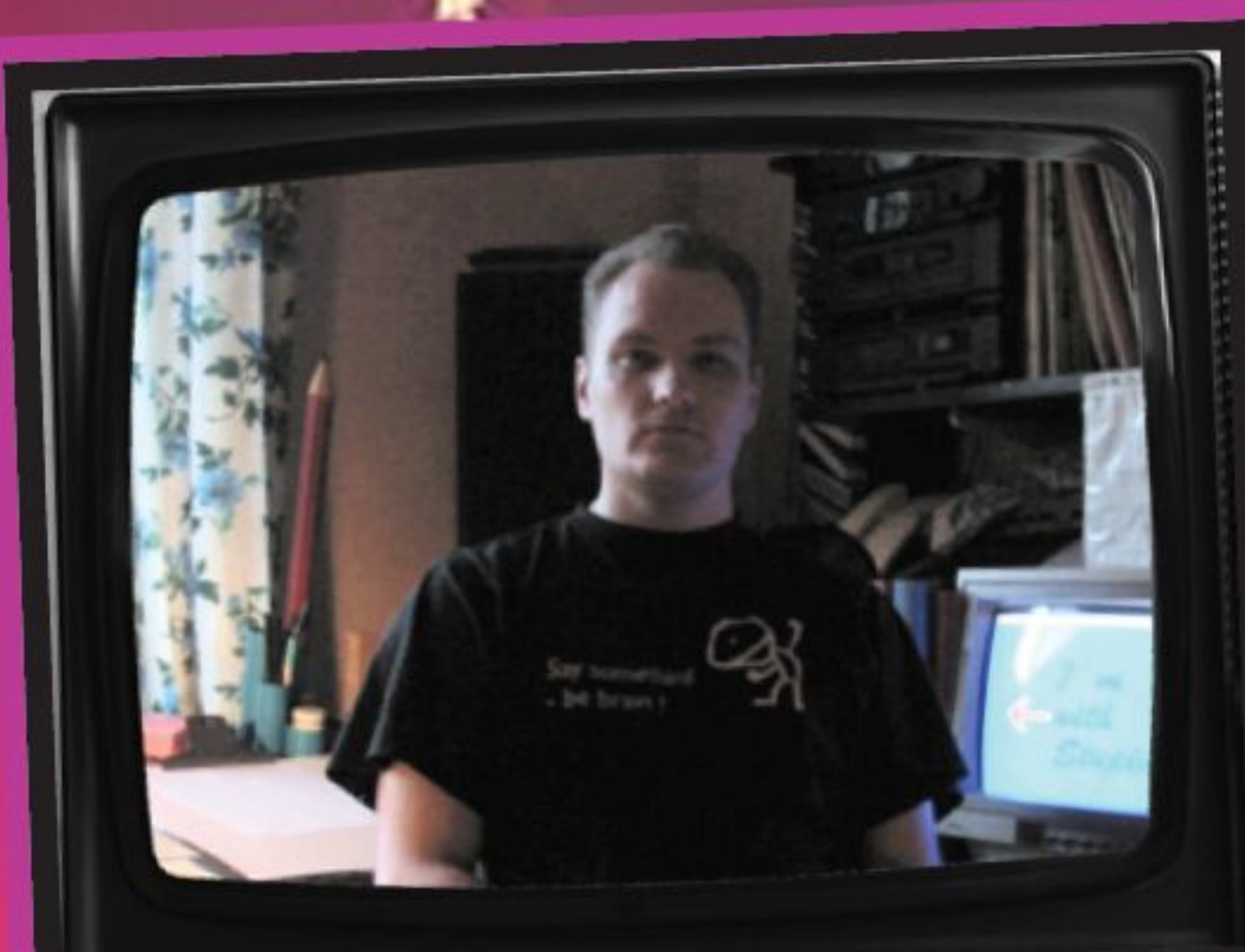
Resistance is futile?

Despite the benefits of progression, people can be resistant to change. Nostalgia quite possibly brought you to ZZAP! AMIGA in the first place? So, how does the scene feel about the changes in the culture of Amiga parties between 1990s and mid 2020s, and how did they feel about the scene essentially being locked up during COVID-19. Let's talk to some stalwarts of Amiga-dom who have been here through thick and thin...



don't know if COVID brought an evolution, people were forced to move online but went back to the old-skool experience after restrictions lifted. I'm surprised how well parties worked online. Look at Revision, so many releases.

**Pride of Brainstorm/
Lemon**



Online parties are mostly fine, but not the same. We want to watch demos on the big screen, not on a small monitor at home with a can of coke.

Photon of Scoopex



We stay overnight in hotels now rather than the party place! Cross party development benefits high quality releases. Modern parties in larger hired locations can feature gigs, DJ sets and other performances. Outreach is widened via digital invitation rather than paper flyers in the old days, which leads to more international visitors.

Magic of Nah-Kolor

SILKWORM



Welcome to the next instalment of the ZZAP! Amiga Files, where we focus on one game, telling its story as revealed throughout the pages of the world's most fabulous Commodore magazine. From reviews to marketing, tips, and more, Graeme Mason delves into the files to discover everything we said about a particular game.

In this issue, he jumps into a sturdy Jeep to take on The Sales Curve's stunning debut, Silkworm.

The Game

Released by Tecmo in 1988, Silkworm was an instant hit, its simultaneous two-player shooting action perfectly suited to the arcades. The players take control of a helicopter and Jeep against a horde of enemies, the minions of a Skynet-esque supercomputer. The newly formed developer-publisher The Sales Curve signed Silkworm for conversion to the home formats, and its team went above and beyond for the Amiga game in particular. Featuring co-op play, beautifully sleek graphics, and additional material such as an actual ending, Silkworm became one of those rarest of coin-op conversions, one that was universally adored across every format.



The Review

A demo of Silkworm reached ZZAP! just after Christmas 1988, so we already had an idea that it would be something special. The full game appeared in the Spring of 1989 and immediately proved popular with our shoot-'em-up-obsessed reviewers. "The graphics, especially on the Amiga, are really atmospheric, and the sound effects are pretty hot as well," declared an excitable Gordon Houghton, and The Sales Curve's desire to improve upon the arcade original was also noticed by Gordo. "What impresses me even more is that they've bothered to program in an extra alien for the Amiga – which means you get the equivalent of the arcade game and even more." Gordo's colleagues were equally animated, especially Maff Evans, who amazingly claimed some of the Amiga graphics were better than the arcade original! It was high praise all round in our dual C64-Amiga review – how would Silkworm fare in the final analysis?



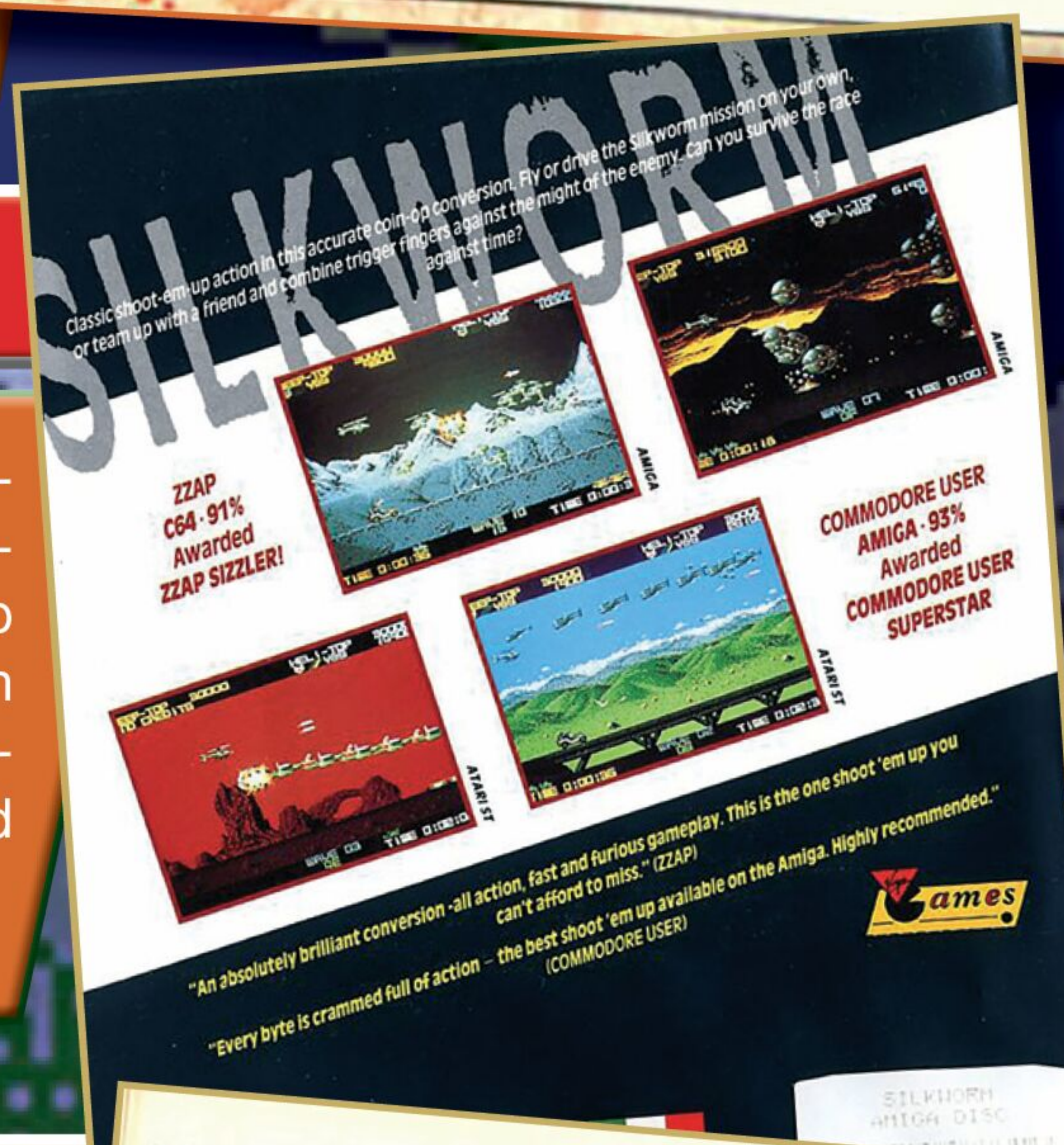
The Verdict

As the reviewers' remarks suggested, Silkworm's display was given the highest praise as we confirmed some 'Excellently animated backdrops and sprites' with a score of 92%. However, Presentation and Hookability eclipsed this with scores of 93% apiece, as only sound (80%) failed to make the Nineties. "A fast, frenetic, and well-presented shoot-'em-up" was our considered concluding comment to the Silkworm review, together with a score of 92% for the Amiga version, one percent more than the superb C64 game.

64	amiga
90%	93%
PRESENTATION	
Single player and team modes, double score tables and an excellently programmed Amiga multiloop. The 64 one's pretty fast as well!	
74%	92%
GRAPHICS	
Excellently animated backdrops and sprites on the Amiga. 64 backdrops (with parallax) look good but the sprites themselves aren't overly impressive.	
83%	80%
SOUND	
Good effects on the Amiga, but the tunes could be more 'vicious' sounding. The 64 version has the added advantage of a Ben Daglish soundtrack.	
93%	93%
HOOKABILITY	
Gripping blasting fun from the outset.	
91%	90%
LASTABILITY	
Both versions are a little tough, and with over ten levels and two ways of playing, you'll be playing for ages.	
91%	92%
OVERALL	
A fast, frenetic and well presented shoot 'em up well worth a few shekels.	

ZZAP! On The Back

The Sales Curve unsurprisingly used ZZAP!'s enthusiasm on the back cover of its game, celebrating its Sizzler status with a brace of Amiga screenshots. The blurb mashed up Gordon and Kati Hamza's comments: "An absolutely brilliant conversion – all action, fast and furious gameplay. This is one shoot-'em-up you can't afford to miss."



A Silkworm Compo

ZZAP! teamed up with The Sales Curve for its Silkworm competition inside issue 49 – and what a prize it was. One lucky winner would receive a copy of Silkworm and four more The Sales Curve games, enjoy a meet-and-greet with the Random Access programmers, get to play on a range of brilliant arcade games, and, finally, board a helicopter for a trip over London – missiles not included! Further copies of Silkworm and the other games awaited ten runners-up, and all you had to do was answer three easy multi-choice questions.



Lucky Mick!

We were unsurprisingly inundated with entries for our Silkworm compo, and revealed the lucky winner in issue 51. Mick Wall of Sheffield rode around in a chopper over London and played various arcade games with Silkworm's programmers. Nice!

I'M SILKY, FLY ME COMPETITION

Not a pastime that I'm that keen on, flying. All that dryness does nothing for my fishy fluids, I can tell you. Of course, give me a bowl of water and a castle and I'll fly to the ends of the Earth – well, Hackney at least. Someone who definitely is going to fly to Hackney, indeed, across the whole of London, is:

Mick Wall, SHEFFIELD S6 1SB.

Not only that, but he'll meet Silkworm's programmers, Random Access, spend a long time playing the arcade games Gemini Wings, Ninja Warrior, Continental Circus and Shinobi AND witness production of the computer versions. Ten runners-up will receive the five home computer games as they are released through the year from Virgin. Pray be standing for:

P Thomason, SLOUGH SL1 1QN; P S Mullineux, MANCHESTER M29 0HH; John Byrne, Co.Cork IRELAND; David Camina, ESSEX SS6 7SN; Steven Raper, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE NE5 3UX; Marcos Simpson, NORTHWOOD HA6 1AN; Craig Johnson, LEICESTER LE6 4LY; Piers Finlayson, MACCLESFIELD SK11 7DB; C White, LONDON E16 2LX; Stuart Murphy, CHELMSFORD CM2 7EJ.

Blasting into the Charts... Briefly

1989 was a difficult time for the charts, and Silkworm became an unfortunate victim of its disappearance. Two issues after its review, The Sales Curve game debuted at number three in our Amiga chart, beating out competitors such as Pacmania, Barbarian II, and TV Sports Football. Sadly, the ZZAP! hierarchy deemed the charts surplus to requirements for most of 1989. By the time they returned in issue 58, Silkworm was long-forgotten by Amiga fans.

Amiga top 10

1. Speedball
2. Cybernoid 2
3. Silkworm
4. TV Sports Football
5. Elite
6. Pacmania
7. Barbarian II
8. Buggy Boy
9. Operation Wolf
10. LED Storm

Shooting Tips And Tricks

Issue 50 brought a neat little infinite lives and level select cheat to Silkworm, while Amiga fan Adam Watt submitted an interesting tip five issues later. "If you press F1 to F10, you can slow the game down... useful for dodging the fast-moving missiles." An extra hand always helps, too...



SILKWORM (Sales Curve)

Here's a little cheat that we found useful for the Amiga version of this Sizzling shoot 'em up. It may not work on the version in the shops, but it's worth a try. Hold down the Help key and press fire to start. You should now have infinite lives and if you press 1-0 you can select levels one to ten. Woo!

Silkworm In Dispatches

DEATH'S JUST NOT THE SAME ANYMORE

Dear Lloyd,

... I've been driven mad by crash/dying scenes on computer games. I have noticed two extremes. *Parallax* for instance: a brilliant game but it takes five minutes for you to die. While you're thinking about what to do next time and are raring to go it is still playing you this pathetic, unmusical tune which basically says:

'Ha, Ha, Ha you lost'.

Another example of this was when I played *Lombard Rac Rally* on my friend's (forgive my cursing on this clean - well nearly anyway - mag) Atari 520 ST FM (Yeuch). I was going so slow that the speedometer wasn't even registering but when I hit a haystack with the front of the car, a dollar sign flew skywards!

The other extreme is in *Test Drive*. You are in a Ferrari Testarossa (vrooom!) doing 180 MPH (vrooom!) you fly off the end

of the cliff (weeee!) and you crack your windscreen.

Also, in *Spitfire 40* (old as it is) you are in a 90 degree drop, maximum speed, maximum revs and yet when you hit the ground you crack the window (again). Can't those stupid people who get together and call themselves software companies get their act together and make more elaborate (but not tedious) dying scenes.

IMN Webber, Croydon

Yeah - I think end of game screens are definitely worth waiting for - even if it means loading in a bit of extra data at the end of the game. There are some pretty good ones about though. The programmers of *Silkworm* for example went out of their way to create a really nifty end of game sequence even though the coin-op itself hasn't got one. So come on all you boring end of game screen programmers, get your act together and really start to groovy on down. By the way, I disagree about the end-of-game sequence in *Parallax* - we all think it's brill.

LM

'Death's just not the same anymore', lamented IMN Webber of Croydon inside issue 50's letters pages. Faced with this criticism of game endings, Lloyd Mangram quickly paid tribute to *Silkworm*'s amended conclusion. The shoot-'em-up was cited again in issue 54 - but this time, by reader Simon Liu of Surrey - as one of the few games worthy of the £19.95 price tag. Simon's letter inevitably led to another debate about piracy on the 16-bit computer.



A Scorelord Legend

Shoot-'em-ups such as *Silkworm* lend themselves to high-score challenges, so it was no surprise to see it feature often in the Scorelord's domain. Interestingly, the scores improved dramatically over time, from Dean James's 812,500 in issue 54 to an incredible 1,590,300 from Stephen Bidgeon of Wythenshawe five months later.

3,427 Richard 'I love Basildon' Archibald, Basildon
2,926 Karl Green, Acklam, Cleveland

SILKWORM (Virgin)

1,590,300 Stephen Bidgeon, Wythenshawe, Manchester
1,288,900 Christian Björkman, Nykarleby, Finland
1,072,600 Gaspart Arnaud, Belgium

(Amiga)

1,138,200 Neil Head, Stourbridge, W Mids
1,061,200 Paul Castro, Northolt, Middx
359,300 (Completed) Steve Packer, Chelmsford, Essex

STRIDER (Capcom) (Amiga)

1,077,500 Rafe Ball, Acton, London
302,900 (Completed five times) Julio Riesco, Pensby, Merseyside
124,900 Marcus Taylor, Poole, Dorset

Final Thoughts

Poor arcade conversions plagued the Amiga throughout the Eighties, making *Silkworm* both an utter delight and a lovely surprise for owners of the 16-bit machine. Proving what was possible with a bit of thought, consideration, and extra effort, *Silkworm* cemented The Sales Curve's position and paved the way for its magnificent follow-up, *SWIV*.



© 1988 TECMO LTD

PRODUCED BY THE SALES CURVE LTD

PROGRAMMED BY RANDOM ACCESS

MUSIC BY IMAGITEC DESIGN LTD

CRACKED IN 1989 BY TRILLOGY

CONFESSIONS

of an Amiga Scener

It is said that when we confess, we are absolved of our sins, and thus, we are forgiven. I'm not sure that Andrew Hewson would agree in this instance. Luckily, I am not here to judge but to listen, as tales of the past are explored without prejudice. I'm Judge Drokk, founding member of Amiga team Anarchy, and far from a saint myself - but I do have a good ear. In this fourth and final confession in this series, we welcome 'Mr. P'. Is it 'P' for proud, pirate, or penitent? Let's find out...



JD - Being a doctor with three degrees (BSc, Medical degree & Fellow of a Royal College) seems like a far cry from the Amiga scene. It's odd how things turn out.

Mr. P. - Back in the day, I wanted to program computer games. I ended up joining one of the biggest cracking groups in the world at the time (Vision Factory) and became their

main man (well, schoolboy) in the UK.

Typically, I would rush home from school, desperate to get the 3.05pm bus (school finished at 3pm) in order to get an original game from the shop, such as *Shadow of The Beast* or *Robocop*.

Once home, I would fire up my bespoke software (which, sadly, I don't have any more), and "warp up"

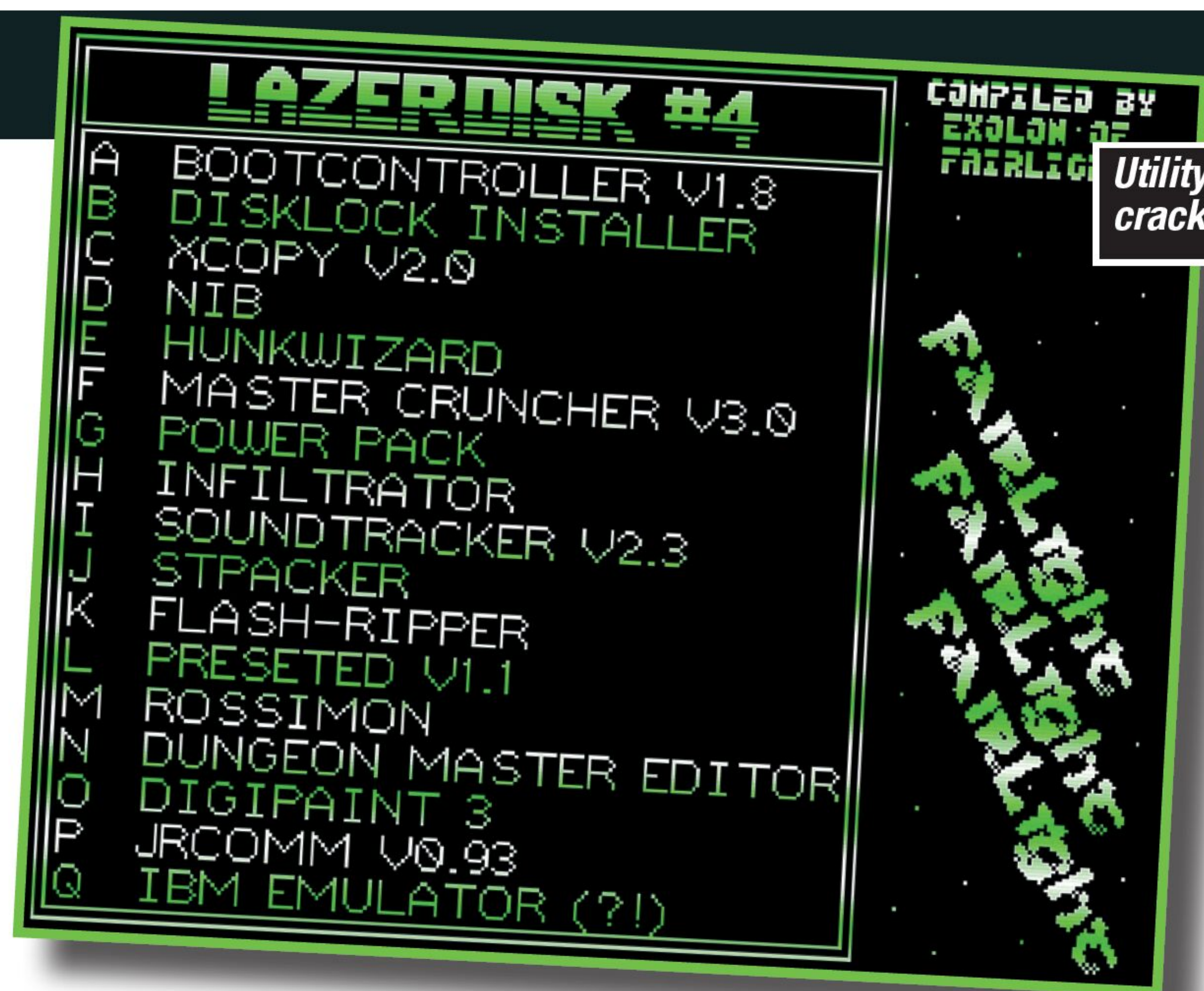
the game in 'MFM' mode. Then, I would transfer a file or two using a 9600 baud modem to the 'cracker'.

This cracker was a postgraduate student in electronic/software engineering and based in Berlin, Germany. Someone who I have, sadly, long since lost touch with.

We would dissect the boot block and a few tracks using a tool called *Rossimon*. It would give him an idea of the kind of protection the game had.

All the while, the clock was ticking, and by now, it would be around 4.45pm. It was a race against time, and the other pirates on the scene were using the exact same techniques. Maybe I would extract a few checksums and then attempt another MFM warp of specific tracks, altering parameters to get the





Utility disk with Rossimon - a popular cracking tool of the day.

dumb copy into some kind of semi-working state.

The local Post Office was around 100 meters from my house, and I needed to get the original in the post (swift air) to Germany by 5.20pm. The jiffy bag, the sellotape, and the package addressed correctly.

The people in the Post Office would be exasperated when I arrived, wanting to shut up shop. The postman would be collecting the mail and be looking to drive off in his van, calling it a day, but he'd wait. I tried to explain the importance of what I was doing, but they never really understood. Something to do with computers, but their thoughts were probably, "What the hell is this kid doing with all his Swift Air deliveries to

Germany that's delaying my clocking off and shutting up shop?!" Wondering if it was something "dodgy". And it was dodgy, to say the least.

This was not the way to learn how to program computers, and it was stressful, but somehow, I would manage to get the package on its way in time.

Sometimes, the game would arrive the very next day in Germany, but

usually, it took 48 hours, not bad for Royal Mail, and about £5 postage, which was a fair amount of money in those days. "Where is this school kid getting all this money?", was probably another thought the Post Office staff would have had.

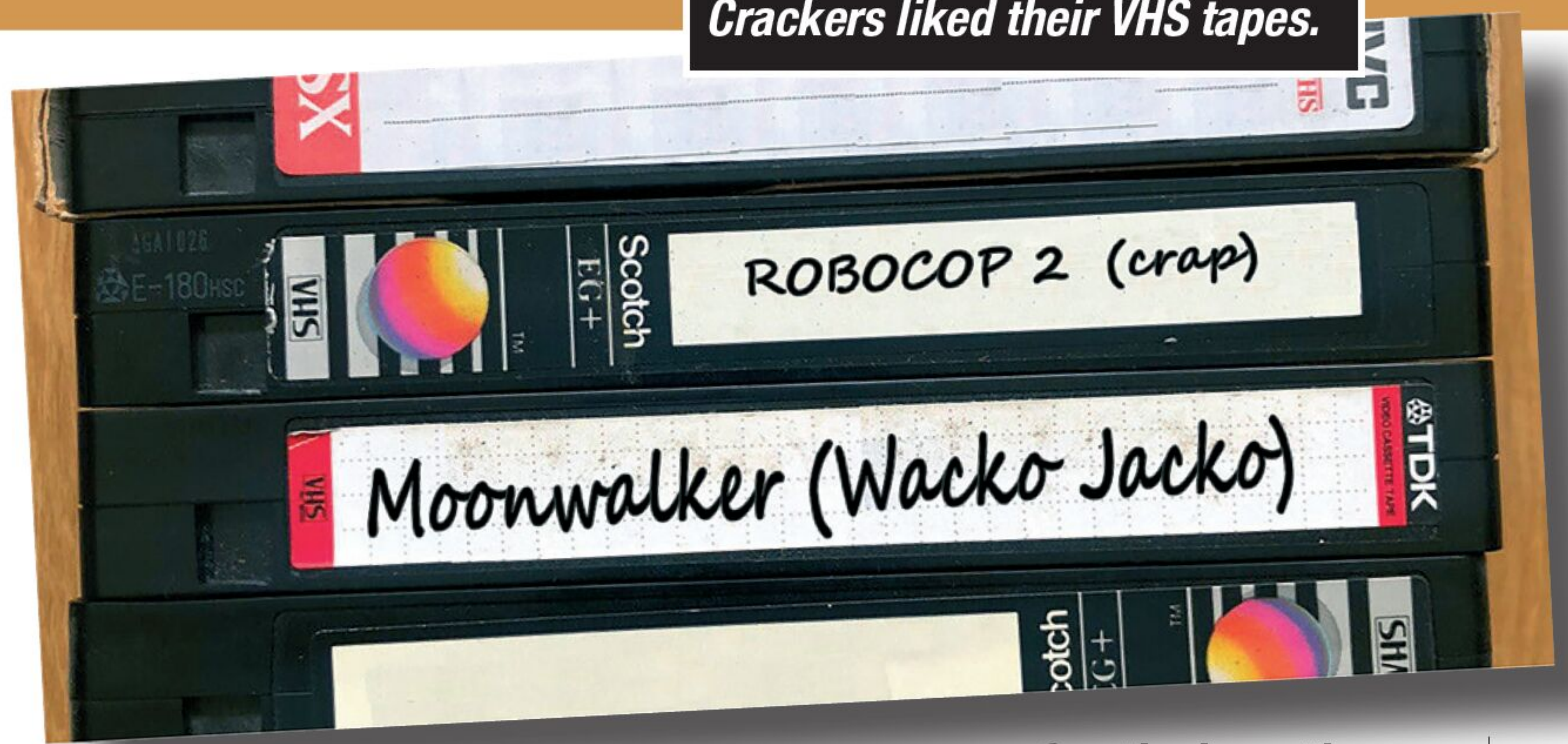
Each "crack and release" would have its own story. The cracker in Germany moved on eventually, getting a proper job when he got his higher qualifications. He was a decent guy, and I'm sorry we lost touch.

Recently, I managed to contact 'Sub Zero' via the English Amiga Board. He was around at the time, and knows some of the history and stories, but he also has lost touch with the people I knew most.

A fresh copy of Shadow of the Beast, ready for the cracking treatment.



Crackers liked their VHS tapes.



Ultimately, I grew to resent “the scene” and “sceners” as there was a lot of aggressive self-aggrandising that went on, and I probably got frustrated. At one stage, I set up a bulletin board, so had some money for a hard drive and telephone line, but I remember getting a £500 phone bill in 1991!

I abandoned the scene completely after a 2-3 year rollercoaster. I later got an ‘A’ grade in A-level Computer Science, so I must have learnt something from all those ill-spent hours!

After school, I ended up doing something in life quite unrelated to computer programming. But those days have left an indelible mark on my psyche; I’m still tinkering now!!

JD - A £500 phone bill must have hurt! Did you try the common ways to get around the inconvenience of having to pay for such services by phreaking, blue-boxing, etc., or did you try out any of the possible ways where the scene could generate cash for you to pay for such expenses?

Mr. P - The £500 phone bill came on top of all the phreaking I was doing. Blue-boxing didn’t work on the digital networks of the late 80s onwards. There was no money in the “scene” either - anyone who said there was, is lying.

There may have been an occasional £5 for copying some games. The pirates liked their VHS tapes, too, so there were a few pounds there loaning them out. Just enough for computer mags, blank disks, chocolate bars, crisps, & Lucozade.

As for the phone bill, luckily I had older siblings who were working. My brother, particularly, was fascinated by what I was involved with, so I got bailed out.

JD - Referring to my introduction, Mr. Hewson once said that pirates’

excuses for their actions, such as, “we’re spreading awareness of a game” and, “they wouldn’t have bought the game anyway”, are simply nonsense. Is he right?

Mr. P - It’s not that simple. Yes, many games were awful, and you would have felt cheated if you brought the original

But, the main driver was the challenge of cracking the copy protection, and it’s the buzz of reverse engineering it. Added to that would be the trainers and cracktros and having your name in lights. All this demonstrated coding prowess, mastery over a technology, at a time when the whole process of programming was obscure & often deliberately shrouded in secrecy.

I would have rather spent time learning to program (games), but the books were rubbish, and

... **VISION FACTORY** ...

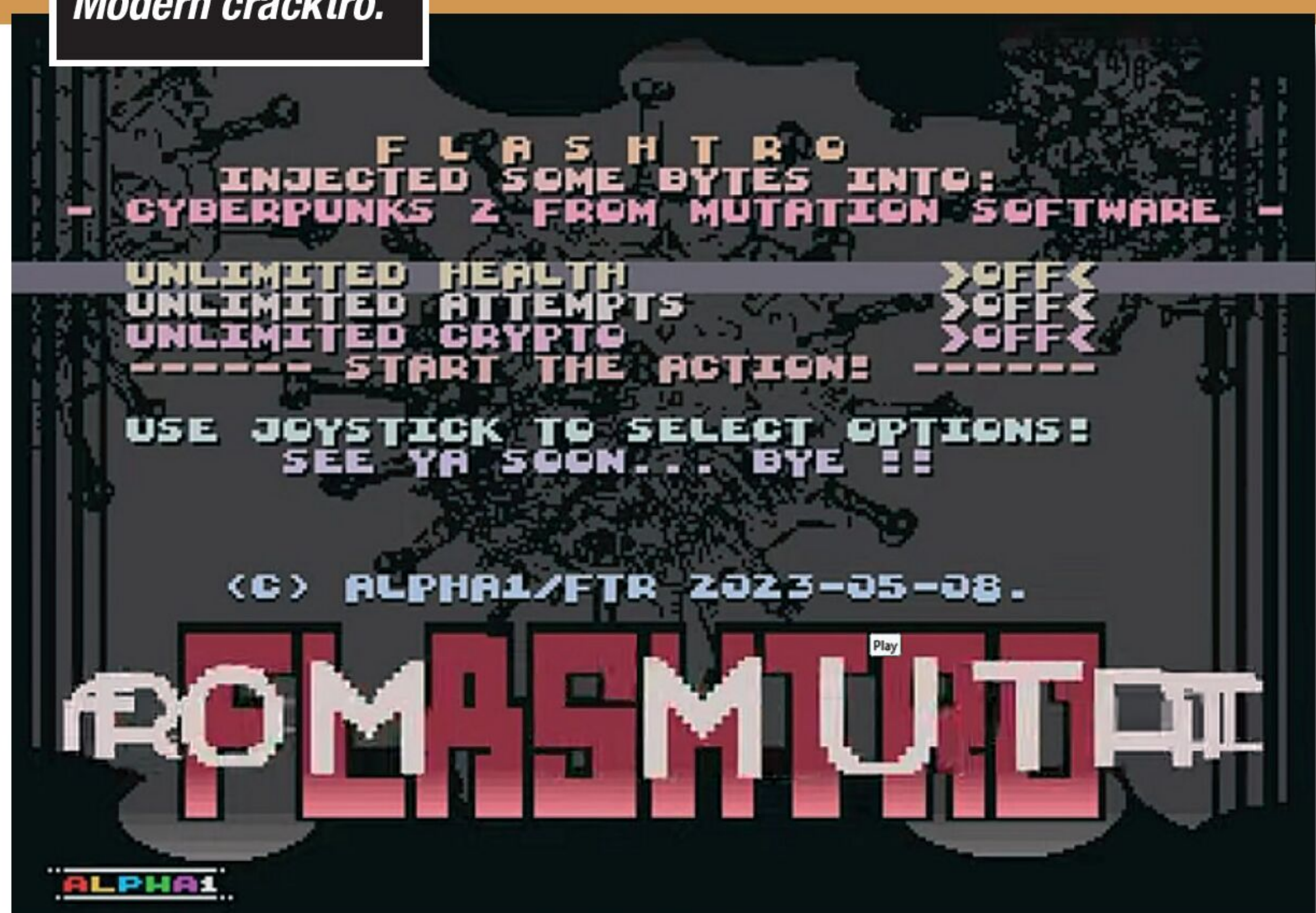
Modern cracktro.

teaching non-existent.

Also, the original games were simply too expensive. How could someone who was 13-18 years old afford £20-100 for one or maybe three/four games in a month? Using the Bank of England's inflation calculator, £20 in 1990 is £47 today. Call it £50 for a game, not a chance. If games were sold at £10 on the Amiga and £5 on the C64, then there would have been no incentive for piracy and more sales revenues, too, I'm sure of that.

JD - As an observer of the 'modern scene', how do you feel about the way things operate today? On Amiga and C64, the industry of old is all but gone, now replaced with a bedroom hobby-industry. The crackers are still around, seemingly suffering from an involuntary reflex where they cannot break habits

Vision Factory Shadow of the Beast Trainer.



formed in the 1990s. If you were born 30 years later, do you think you would have been as eager to join the 'scene of today'?

Mr. P - I have respect for the people on the scene back in the day, when it was the only game in town - real cracking, the unknown, teaching yourself.

Today, hobbyists are releasing games on our beloved Amiga/C64 for fans at nominal prices or

for free. Games that have no copy protection. Cracks today with useless trainers, & self-aggrandising cracktros aren't for me.

Contemporary crackers claim to NTSC fix, improve, or test games for example – I find this disingenuous. In the age of the Internet, the programmer can be contacted about a “bug”, they could fix it themselves. Pasting a cracktro all over the game after contributing little or nothing is offensive.

The game programmers of today are generally the sceners of yesterday. Personally, I think today there should be dual releases of unprotected “warez”, both as clean & trained versions with a cracktro. The “cracked/trained” version for a nominal donation or free, a free download for those harbouring the involuntary reflex of needing to be a “pirate/cracker” or those unwilling to pay £1.





The

SCORPION

Segment

Scorpion is a fast and flexible game-making engine for the Commodore AMIGA computers. In this regular series, we get the latest news and thoughts from the creator, Erik Hogan, as well as insights from some of its most experienced developers.

Engine Tuning with Erik

By the time you're reading this, Scorpion Engine 2023.4 should be officially into public release, thanks to the generous support of the Patreon backers and our sponsors at BitBeamCannon and DragonBox.de.

On the Mega Drive side, we have support for the VGM file format (the most popular format for MD music), as well as the ability to save to a 32kb SRAM cartridge. The save function is entirely compatible with the Amiga counterpart, so most cross-platform games shouldn't require platform-specific code to handle loading and saving.

The Amiga side has had improvements to copper list handling, in particular, the ability to do a copper gradient on any palette index (not simply the background color), including 24-bit colors for AGA. This has been used to wonderful effect on the Castlevania AGA project,

making backgrounds look utterly vibrant with only three base colors expanded into dozens.

Recently, we've seen some controversy with Unity, when they introduced a plan to charge runtime install fees - effectively, charging the developer a fee every time someone installed or reinstalled a copy of their game. There were many reasons why this didn't sit well with game developers, but on the whole, this was seen as a betrayal of trust.

While Unity has rolled back much of their most controversial plans, and their CEO is on the way out, it has left a question - how does this affect Scorpion?

Given the niche nature of the tool, it wasn't likely



Castlevania AGA making use of Scorpion's copper list handling.

that Scorpion was ever going to be installed enough for it to cross over the fees threshold. But I certainly feel like I can't trust Unity with the future of the Scorpion Engine.

While I have dabbled with the Godot Game Engine and .NET Maui framework, neither of them currently fits with me for various reasons. There are, of course, other .NET options, such as MonoGame and the FNA engine, that may be worth investigating, but right now, development of the Unity Editor is continuing as usual.

Project Focus : BOOM!

After seeing a steady increase in games being made with something called the Scorpion Engine, my interest got piqued, and I wanted to check out what the fuss was all about. I have dabbled a bit with Amiga development already and even made a couple of small games. While I love programming, I am always eager to incorporate time-saving and streamlining tools into the workflow. At first glance, Scorpion was a little bit confusing as the workflow introduced some new concepts and ways of doing things. I decided that the best way to get a handle on it was to make an actual game from start to finish which incorporates all the most common elements of a platformer game. I had already started entertaining the idea of making an AmigaBill tribute game at the end of last year. I even drew the animated AmigaBill player character and started laying down some code in Blitz Basic. It felt like a perfect project for learning Scorpion Engine.

The game I made is called *BOOM!* (something he says all the time), where you control AmigaBill, the famous Amiga content creator and generally great guy, on a quest to defeat an evil overlord who stole all our floppy disks. I intentionally wanted to make a slightly cheesy and lightweight platformer that is easy to play, allowing AmigaBill to quickly complete it on stream without dying too much and giving up. I also included homage to other Amiga people, so you'll see some of that around. It was amazing to see AmigaBill playing it on stream and seeing his reaction to all the voice samples and details I put in.

There have been a couple of challenges and issues along the way, but the community has been very helpful every time, and Earok is always ready to help and to update and improve the engine. The biggest challenge hasn't been with the engine itself but drawing all the graphics because that's something I struggle with and spend way too much time on.

I would not have been able to make *BOOM!* in such a short time if it wasn't for Scorpion Engine. It's a brilliant piece of software for getting into Amiga game development, whether you are a seasoned programmer or just starting out.

Zooperdan



Developer Diaries with Mixel

In this regular section, Mixel provides some deeper insights into some of the features of Scorpion, and how they are used in his projects. In this issue, he explains 'player states'.

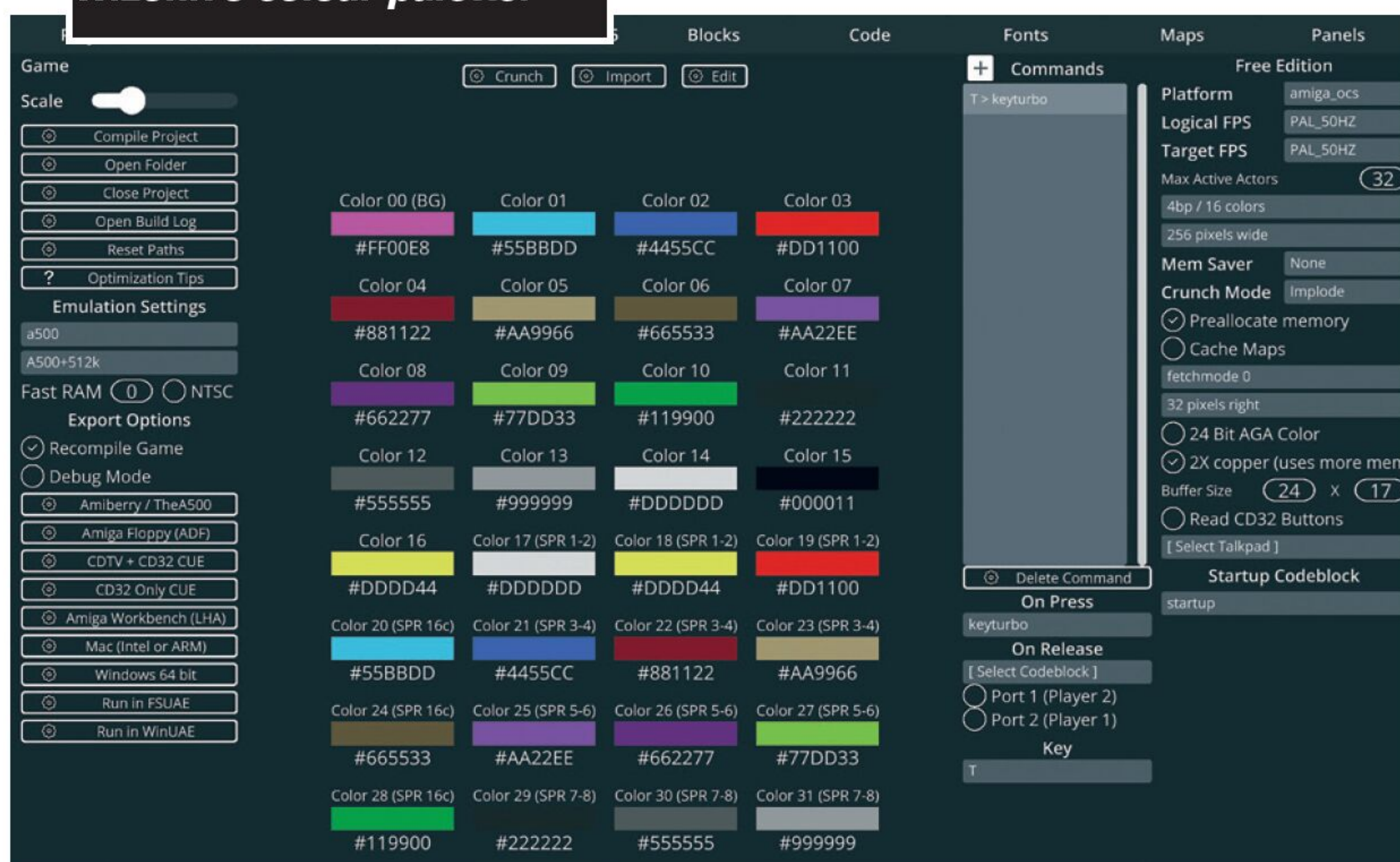


CMO to Wizonk

I'm taking a short break from CMO development to reacclimatise myself with the newest experimental Scorpion builds and its many recent improvements. During this time, I've switched to my other game, *Wizonk*, to relearn some of the ropes and see if everything is still working okay.

Wizonk is predominantly a 2-4 player VS party platform game. Unlike CMO, where I'm targeting slightly higher-end systems, the idea for *Wizonk* is to have it run on all 1MB Amigas and fit on a single floppy

Wizonk's colour palette.



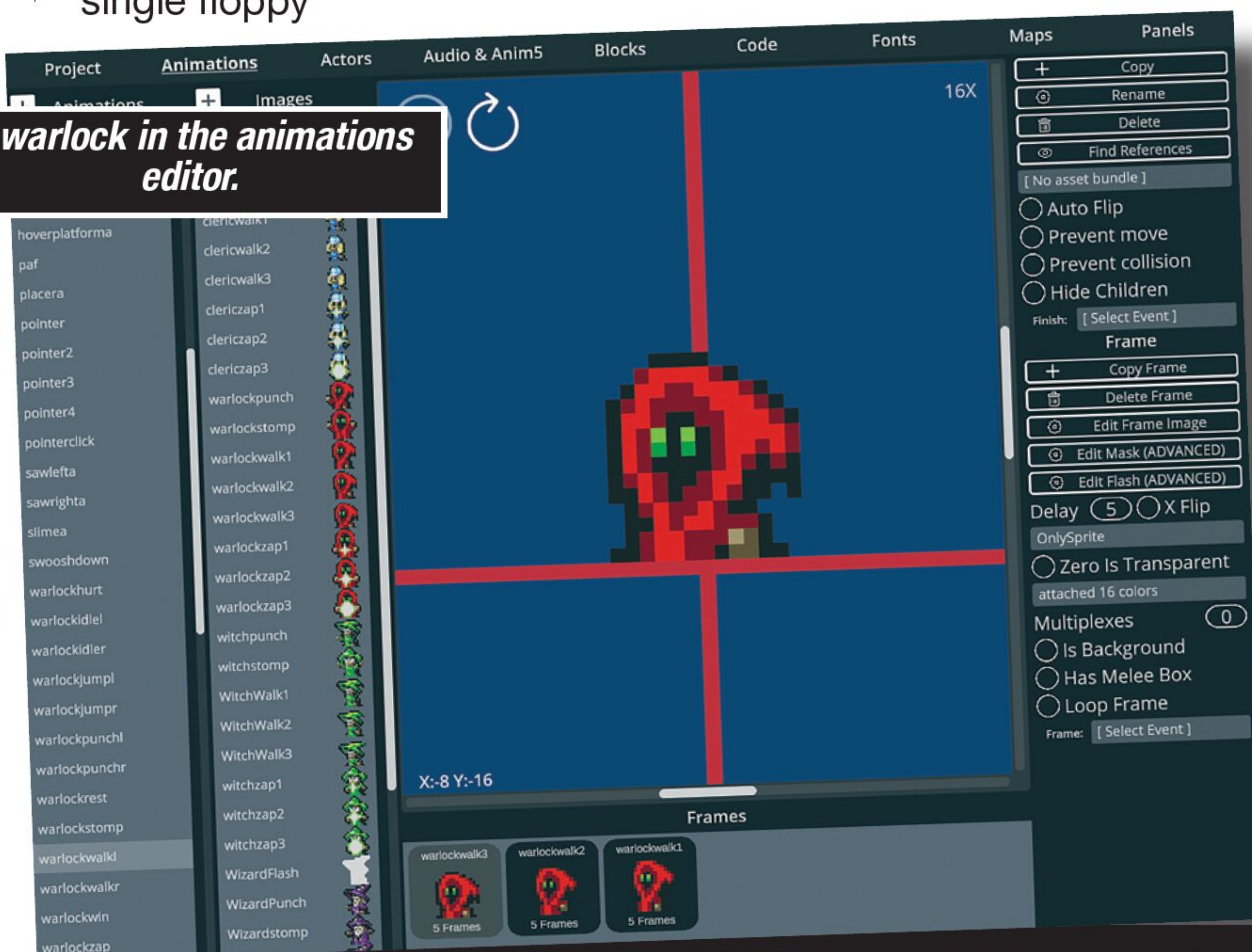
disk. It supports 4-way joystick adapters and has tiny 16x16pixel graphics. Think *Bubble Bobble* or *Fuzzball*, but if everyone was trying to kill each

other. Eventually, I'll add a single-player campaign too, but priority is to get the multiplayer and all of its various powerups working as well as possible, so I can release a multiplayer demo and hopefully bring it to some Amiga events (eek)!

On loading *Wizonk* into the latest Scorpion, other than some palette fixes I needed to make due to changes, indexed colours are used. Everything seems to actually be working first time - it's a miracle!

Wizonk is a 16-colour game for greater performance. But I also needed to make the characters easily distinguishable, so it's all a

A warlock in the animations editor.

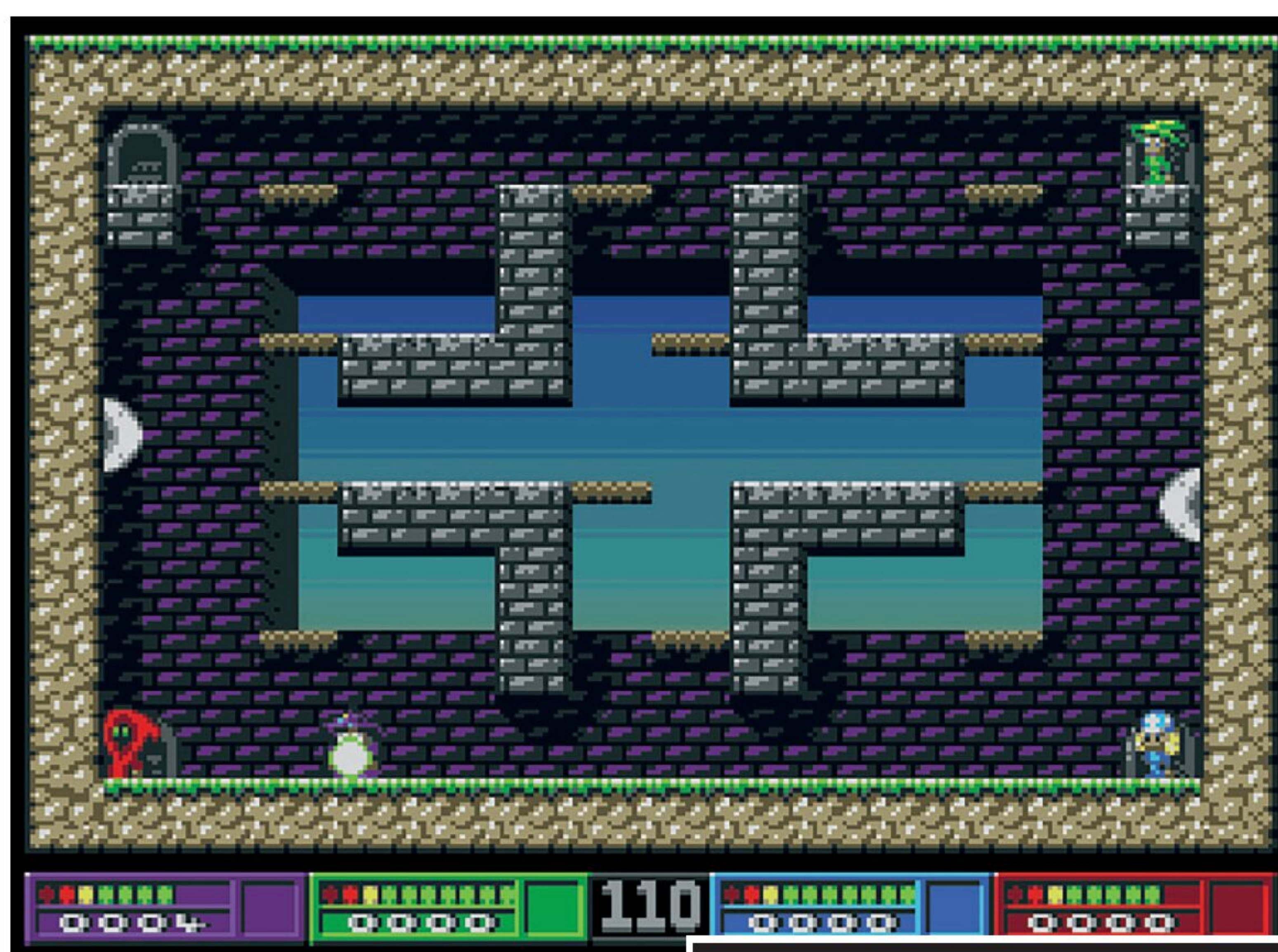


bit garish! Here's the main palette (to the left). You can see it's essentially the same colours repeated twice; that's so I can use the same colours between sprites and bobs without actors changing appearance.

In a game with four players, they use up all of the OCS sprite channels when they're all on screen. To the left is a capture of a Warlock in the animations editor. See how at the right, the player animations are set to "OnlySprite"? This means they'll never be rendered as BOBs and will always be using the sprite colours (#17-#31). As each player is an "Attached 16-colour" sprite, that's how just four onscreen actors are using them all up, but it's fine as it ensures fast performance when everyone's darting about!

Tiled

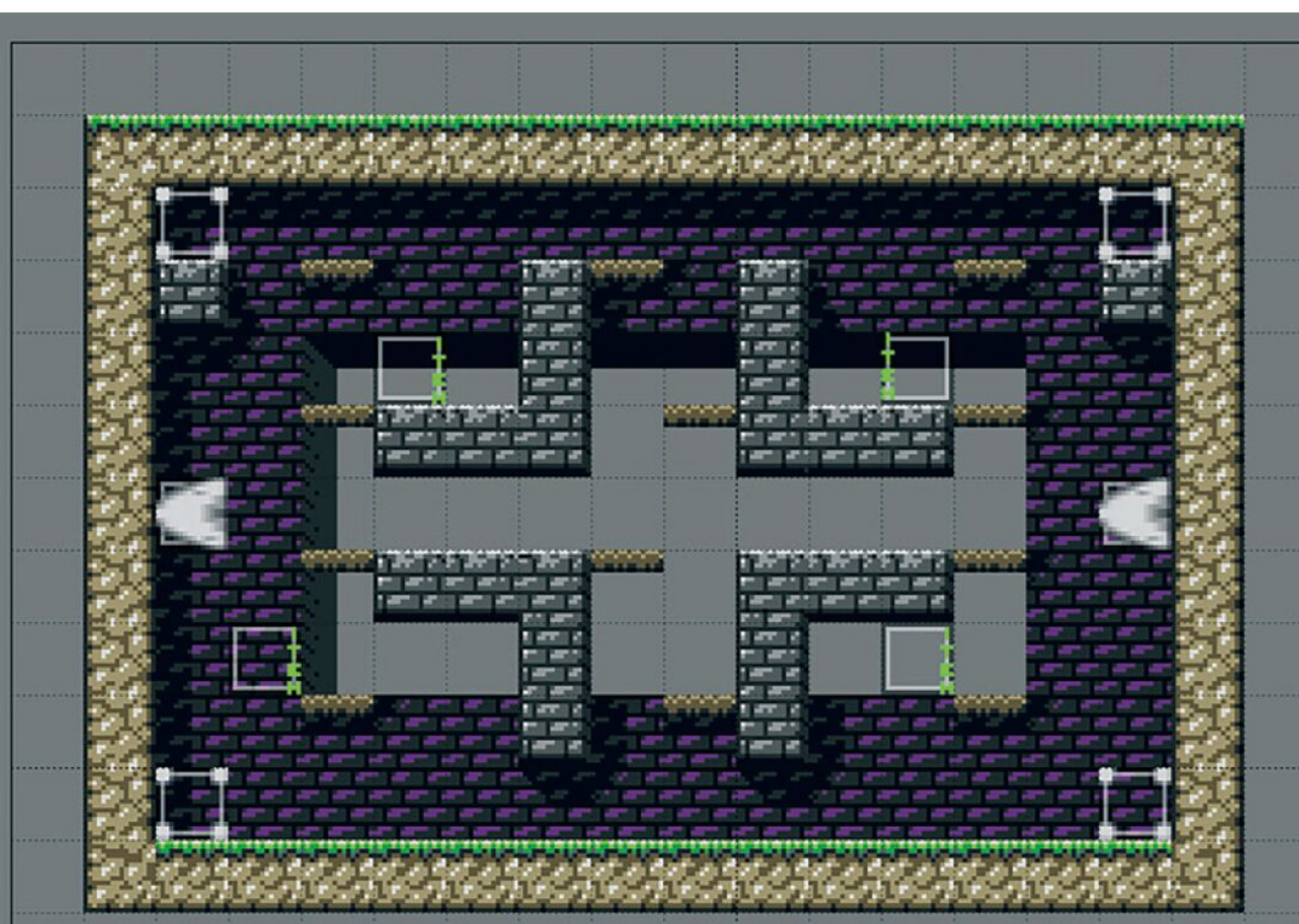
Tiling blocks in Wizonk.



The level in action with copper as its background.

Wizonk uses blocks in some interesting ways. Blocks are Scorpion's way of having animated, scripted squares. They have faster performance than actors, but have some limitations in terms of scripting. You can see here in Tiled, I have "item" blocks with item written in different orientations in their 16px squares. In-game, they're invisible, but I've made them like this so that, on a cramped map, I can tell item pickups to spawn next to the block

instead of overlapping it, so I can place them in the map without interfering with the surrounding area or having to stack things. The four squares in the corners of this map randomly place the spawn points for the four players, shuffling them in case someone thinks the map gives a particular player an unfair advantage each round. The two blobs on the walls at the sides are circular sawblade actors

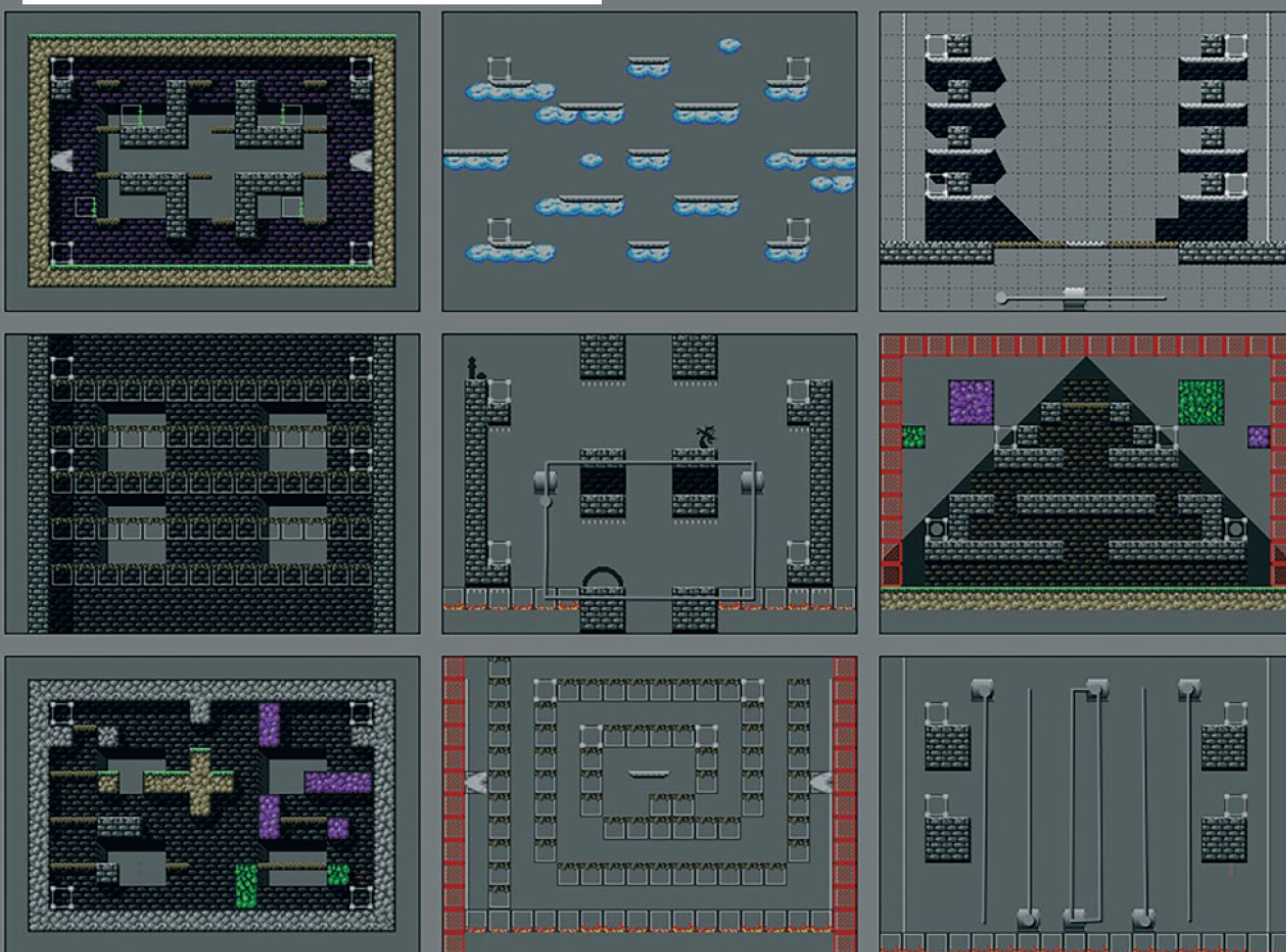


that use CPU_wave paths to swoop up and down!

Another fun use of blocks - my menu system is made entirely of them. It seemed a more visually interesting way of dealing with so many adjustable options, and a good way to allow all four players to alter things in real time.

The main menu screen. *Wizonk* has a lot of early or placeholder graphics, and may go through some changes... That little icon by the map name (Garrisons) indicates the level loops, so when you fall off the bottom, you appear at the top, etc. You can choose time limits, how much health each player will start with, the map, and disable/enable individual power-ups.

Some of Wizonk's 20ish maps. I intend to add a lot more if there's demand.



Wizonk main menu screen.

Single-hit point games often last only a few seconds!

New Scorpion Changes

The most exciting change for *Wizonk* is that in recent months, game performance has improved drastically. The game has a 25fps mode that's a little

more tranquil and a good way of learning the ropes, but it was essential on 7mhz Amigas until recently. The 50fps turbo mode is way more frantic and potentially funny to play in, but the A500 wasn't able to cope with it consistently. Now it does just fine!!

Although nothing seems broken in *Wizonk* at the moment, my code is comically confusing, and I'm reluctant to show much of it; sometimes it takes me a while to even work out how I made things work! When I have four players and need to detect all the collisions between different types of projectiles, it gets complicated fast. I need to take much better notes, but I'll get into the more technical side in a later update, and show more of CMO too. I have a lot of work to do on both over the Christmas period! See you next time...



1989

GAME COVER
CRACKERS

The best game inlay covers of 1989

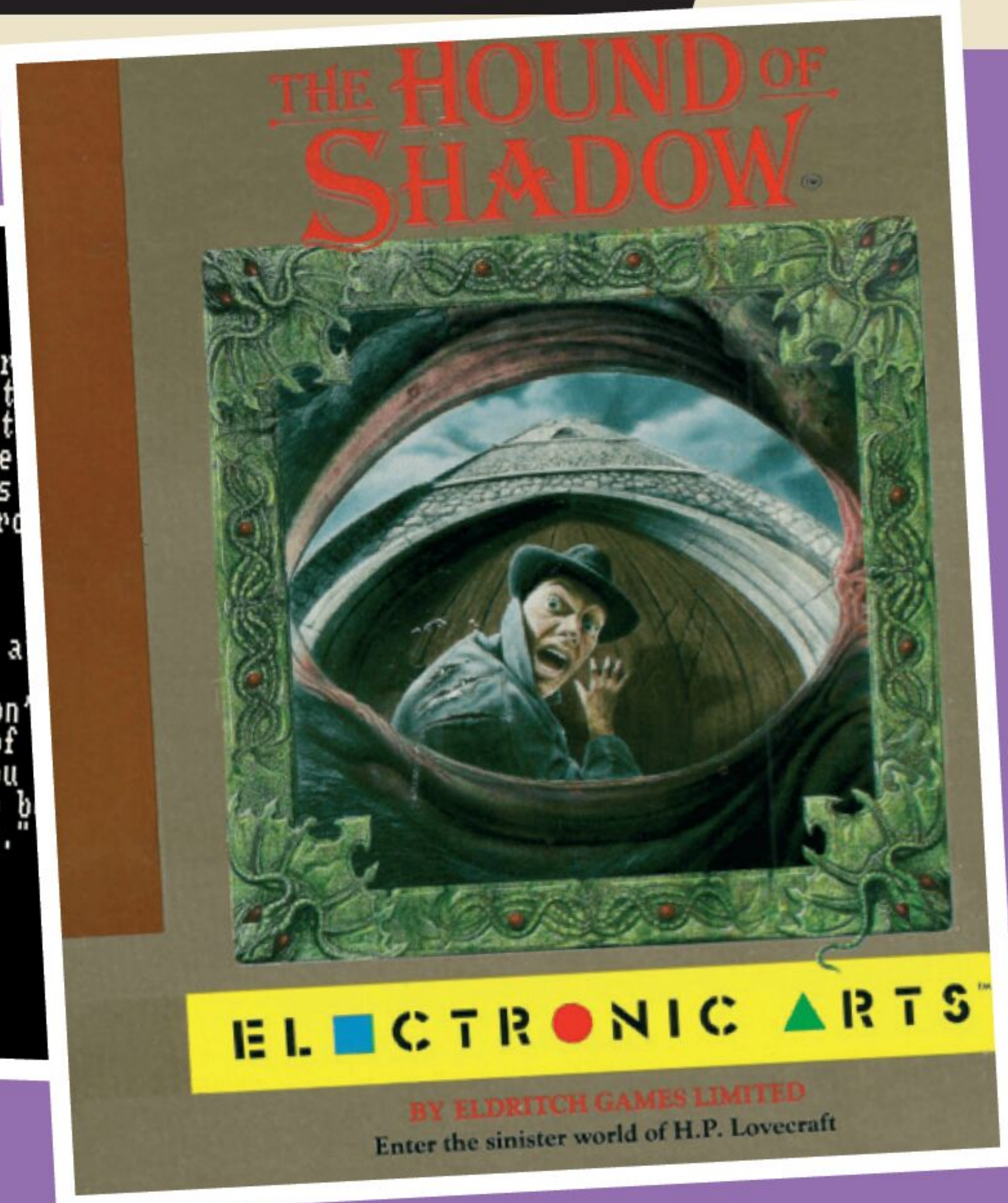
There's been some stunning artwork gracing the covers of Amiga games over the years from various talented artists and photographers. Graeme Mason looks at some of his favourites as we travel back once more to 1989.

The Hound Of Shadow Electronic Arts

I'm a big fan of the stories of Sherlock Holmes, having grown up on the films starring Basil Rathbone as the titular detective. There's a distinctly Holmesian theme to this cover, not least its title, no doubt partly inspired by The Hound Of The Baskervilles.

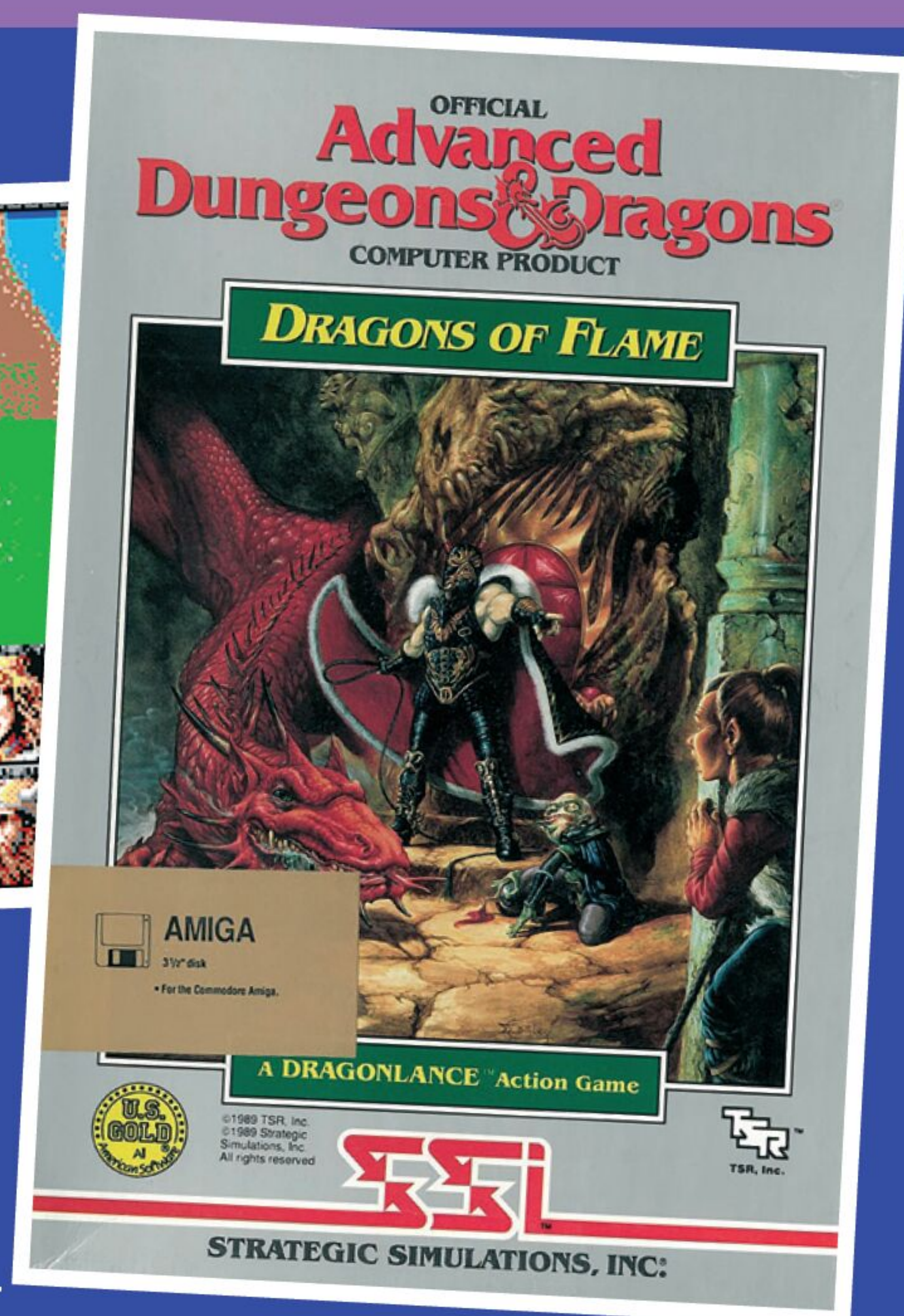
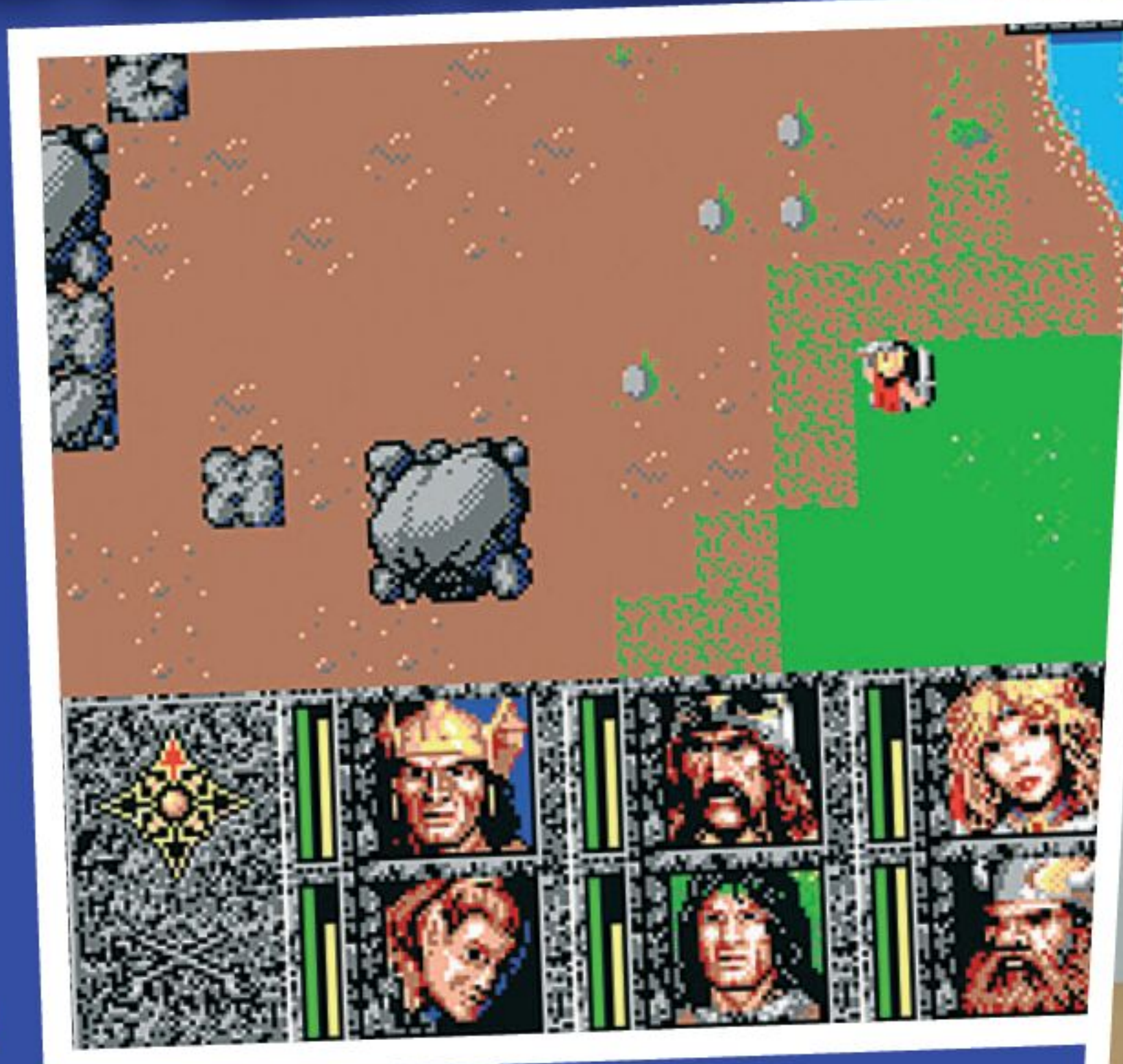
In fact, The Hound Of Shadow owes more to the writings of HP Lovecraft than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, but that takes nothing away from this original and effective cover. A shocked and petrified man, with a trio of vicious claw marks on his back, desperately tries to escape some fearsome creature as a Church-like building rises behind him. The image is neatly reflected in the eye of the hound (presumably), its skin and sinews wrinkled as it hungrily eyes its prey, and I adore the curved effect that the artist has employed. An ornate border brackets the picture, featuring Cthulhu-esque monsters in each corner.

"Graeme, it's John. Are you ready?
we don't want to keep everyone waiting
downstairs to the taxi that is waiting
You climb into the back of the
door slams shut, the driver glances
both seated, and then pulls away from
What now?
wait
You wait. When you next look at
past six.
John leans over to you. "I don't
myself, but great claims are made of
able to produce ectoplasm. Have you
experience, it usually turns out to be
we may be in for a surprise tonight."
What now?



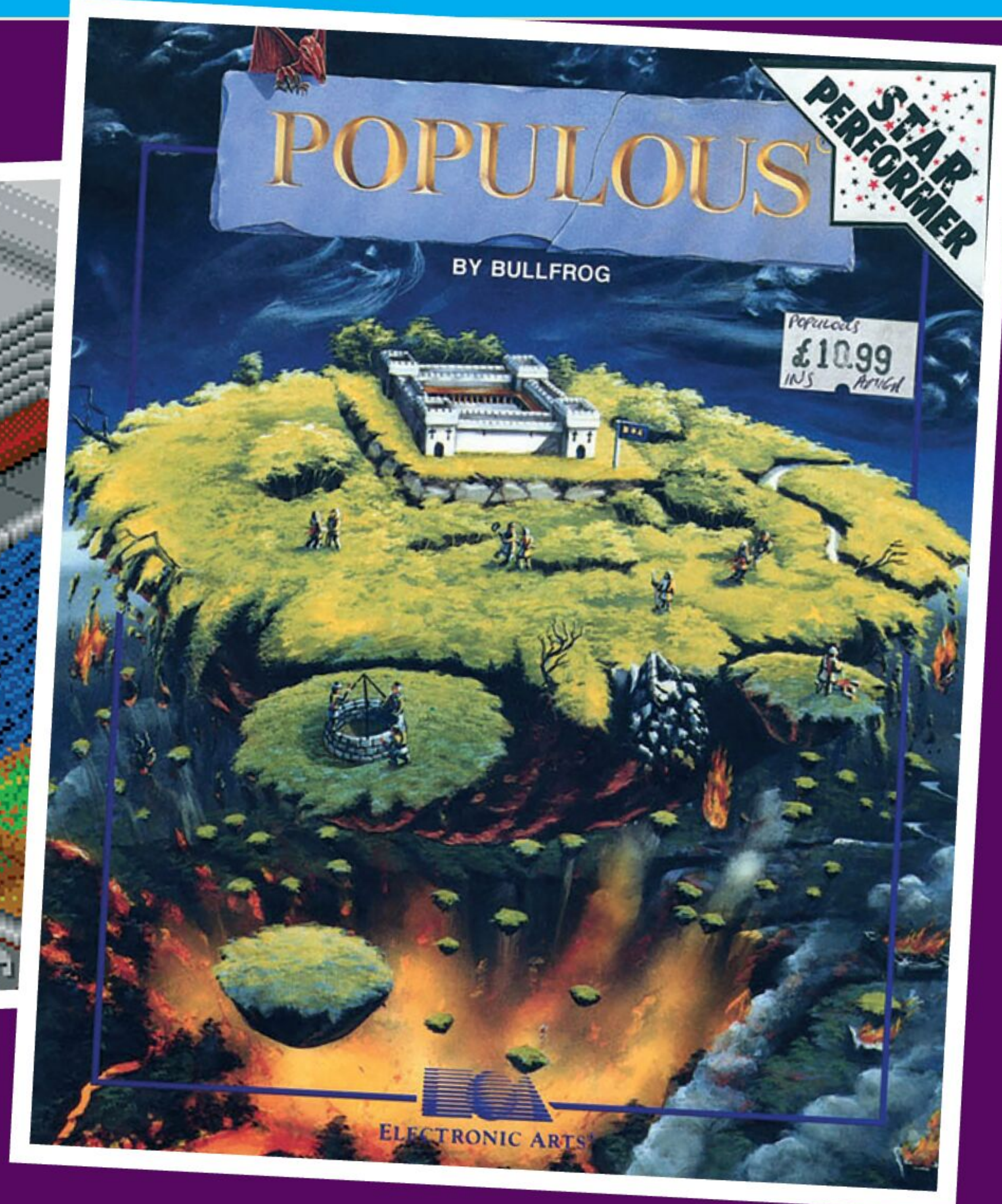
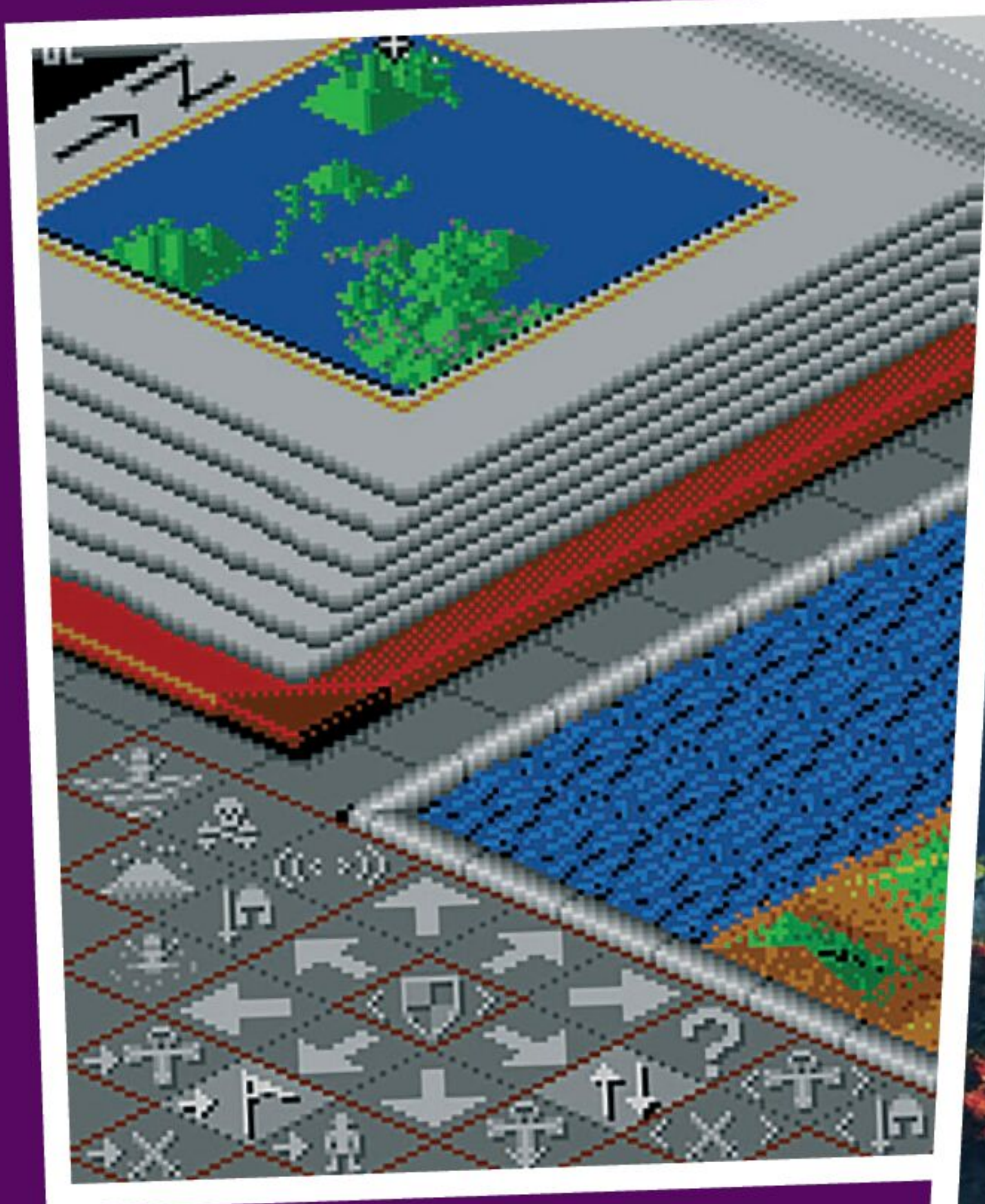
Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dragons Of Flame SSI

Anyone who has followed my look at game covers will appreciate my fondness for RPG box art, and this is another fine example from SSI. Based on the hugely popular Dragonlance novels of the Eighties (of which I was a voracious reader), Dragons Of Flame gains inclusion in this set simply because of the magnificent crimson dragon slithering into view on the left side of the picture. Lavishly painted, with black spikes emanating from its spine, the beastly creature smiles wickedly as it drools over the quivering figure to the right. The central character, the dragon's owner, is pointing dramatically at the same figure, a small dwarf (or Kender or Gnome?), while a frog-like humanoid (a Draconian? Sorry, it's been a while since I read the books!) looks equally terrified. It's a quality painting for another solid SSI RPG.



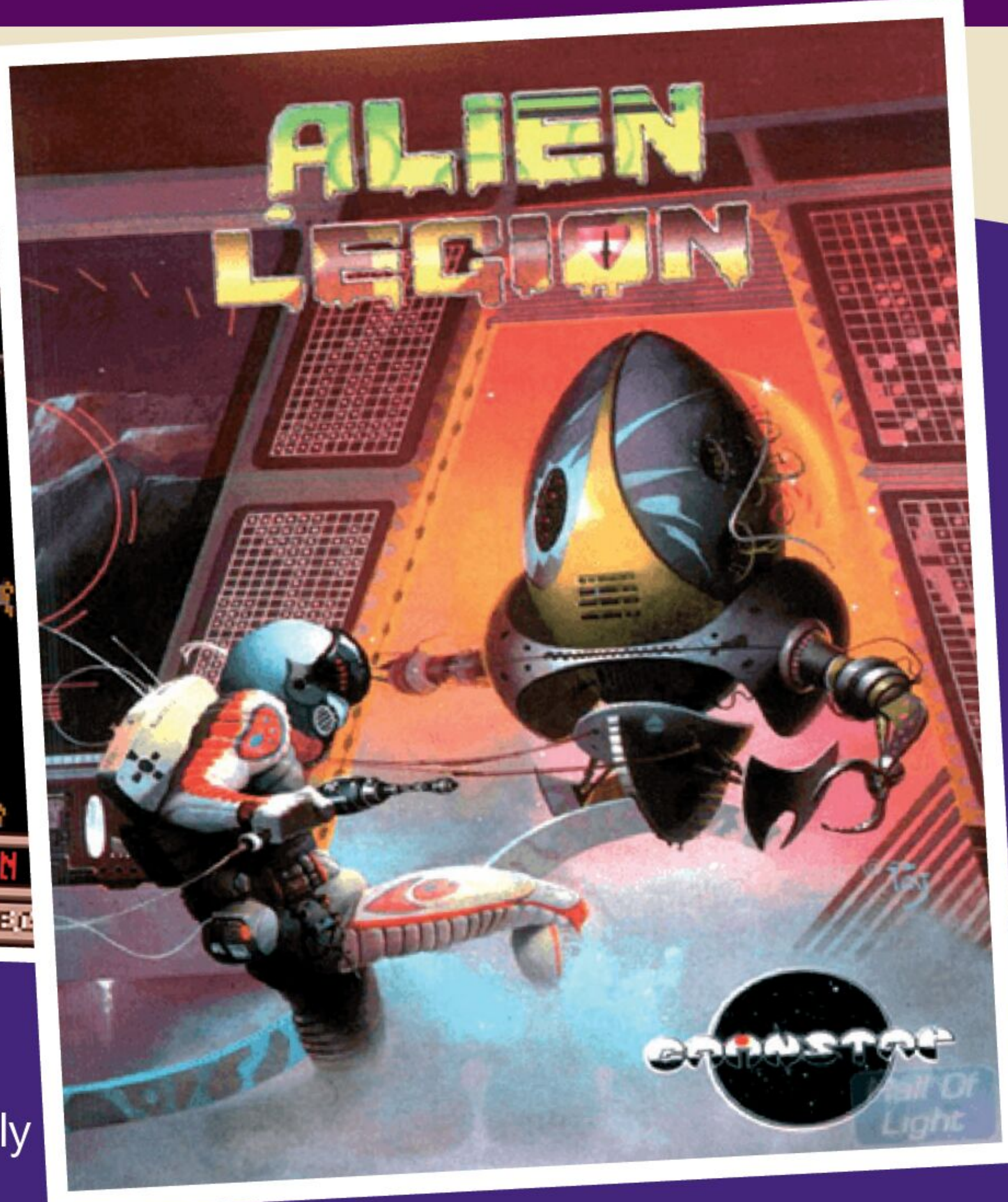
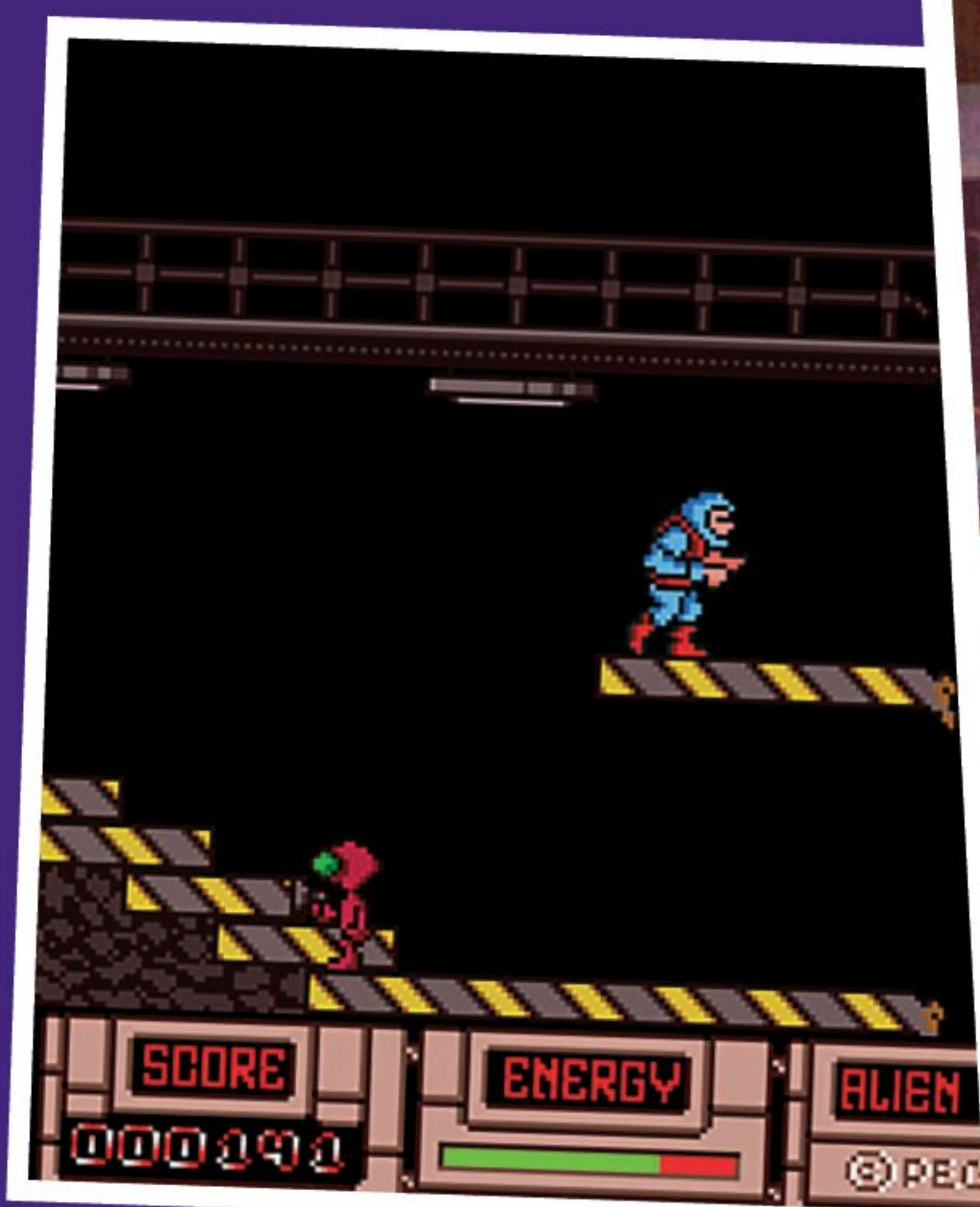
Populous Electronic Arts

The God sim genre exploded in the late Eighties thanks to titles such as this and Sim City. I've never been a particular fan, to be honest, but I've always loved the inventiveness of Populous's cover. A small and verdant segment of land is hovering in space, culled from the rocky planet below. Details include a pristine square castle, a round well, numerous soldiers (seemingly oblivious to the fact they're on a patch of land floating in space) and a few craggy trees. Numerous other pieces of land hover beneath, while ghostly faces swim in the darkness above – perhaps representing the 'Gods' controlling these lands – i.e. the players. Completing the picture is the glowing core of the planet below, a giant hole from which this fragile island has been ruptured.



Alien Legion Gainstar

Firstly, I couldn't help but smile at how Alien Legion's publisher – Gainstar – makes its logo so hard to read! Beyond this, there's a firm influence of classic sci-fi going on here, and as a fan of Seventies and Eighties sci-fi art and fiction, this cover appeals to me greatly. A slim white space-suited figure stands poised on the left, a laser pistol in their right hand, connected to a power pack on their hip. The space person is shocked at the scene before them, an improbably designed robot with an enormous head and slender pincers for hands. Icy-looking mists swirl around the floor, suggesting this robot has just emerged from deep freeze. This is a cover that not only evokes classic science fiction but also suggests an exciting game full of exploration and danger. In reality, Alien Legion is a bland Exolon clone. Oh well.



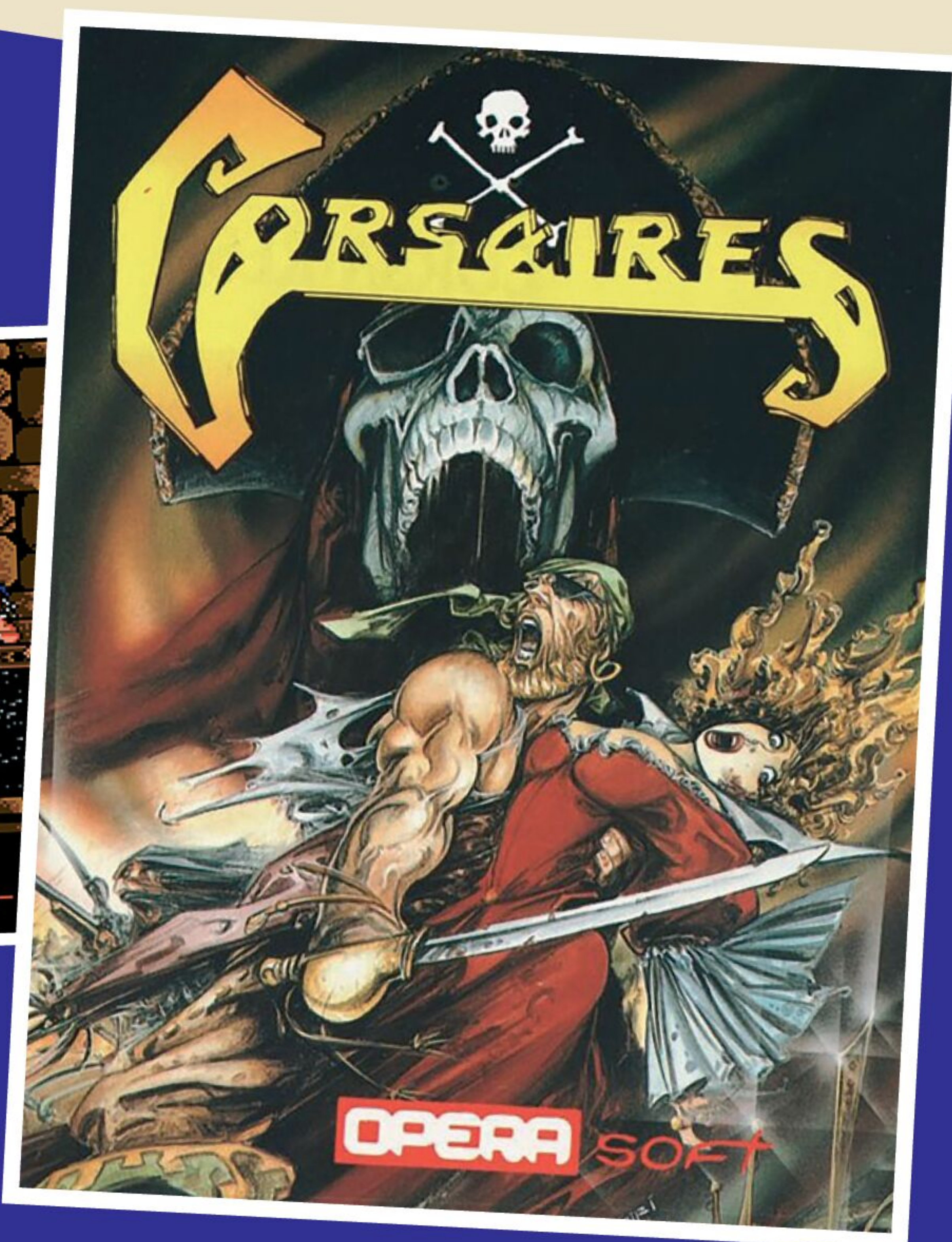
Cosmo Ranger S.O.L. AD 2000 Turtle Byte

I'm currently exploring the galaxy in Bethesda's Starfield whenever I have a spare moment, so this cover of Turtle Byte's Amiga-exclusive game was a shoo-in – even if the game itself is a dull platformer rather than the expansive exploration extravaganza that its cover promises. The lower half of the image is dominated by a bulbous and intricate spacecraft that reminds me of working-class craft such as the Nostromo from Alien. Two small fighters are attacking to the left, as a blue planet broods in the background, and the shadowing the artist has used is most dramatic here. It is a fantastic image for, in truth, an average Amiga game that would surely disappoint anyone expecting something akin to the Eighties classic Elite, let alone a Galaxy-encompassing epic such as Starfield.



Corsaires Operasoft

Finally for this issue, we have this Spanish game that pitches the player against a horde of nasty pirates. It's a simple damsel in distress tale, reflected in the beautiful comic book-style cover. The hero takes centre stage, one muscular arm clutching a battle-weary sword as he holds the buxom lady in the other. I like that the sword has a solid guard over its hilt, eliminating the need for the artist to draw any pesky hands! The maiden's shock of hair is also impressive, but I love that skeletal pirate behind these two the most. Screaming out in anger at the fleeing pair, this dark corsair is reminiscent of the Tales Of The Black Freighter story from Alan Moore's Watchmen graphic novel in its piratical macabre nature. Corsaires is an elaborate and finely-drawn cover that brings a suitable close to this issue's cover crackers. Until the next time!





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